AN ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH PROSE

M. SADIQ

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Essay

AN ANTHOLOGY
OF
ENGLISH PROSE

Qamar Waniq

by

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FOREWORD

WITH the publication of the Education Commission Report we have entered a new stage in the teaching of English. Formerly, the emphasis was on the study of English literature, and while studying it the student learnt some of the English language as well. In other words, the study of English was no more than the by-product of a process essentially literary. The works of Bacon, Lamb, Hazlitt, De Quincey, Carlyle, Ruskin have their value as vehicles of culture, but they are not the best means of acquiring the essentials of modern English, and the teacher has often to warn students against imitating their style. But such warnings are of no avail, for with little or no critical sense the students are more attracted by eccentricities of style than by the everyday vocabulary and usage which constitute a working, functional language. The inevitable result of this has been the use of ornate language for its own sake and with little regard to its meaning.

The present anthology consists of simple, direct, matter-of-fact prose, but that does not mean that the authors of the passages are or were themselves simple people. Simple language, bearing a direct relationship with the world around us, is harder to write than language carried away by emotions which can sever the relationship between language and reality. Simple language, in effect, demands more self-discipline, both in its reading and in its writing. But this is the language that the student of English should struggle to acquire, because in doing so he learns to relate language with facts, whether about people or things. In other words, he learns the meaning of the language he is using. Language without meaning, without a relationship with facts, is useless

for the purpose for which the student requires it.

It is, therefore, I hope, hardly necessary to point out that this anthology is meant for the intensive study of both language and content, the two being properly inseparable. The examiner is unlikely to ask the student to reproduce the content of the passages without relating it in some way to the language in which it is couched. That is to say, to learn the content of the passages one must read the passages themselves, and recourse to help-books, whatever the assiduity of their authors, is likely to confuse rather than help the student. True comprehension—of vocabulary, grammar, idiom—is what really matters, and the teacher would be well advised to have this constantly in view while teaching.

A word about the glossary following each passage. It is not meant to provide a substitute for the dictionary, but in those cases where the student is likely to be perplexed by a variety of alternative meanings I have indicated the meaning which is most appropriate to the context.

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Muhammad Sadiq

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THE MUSIC-BOX

MALACHI WHITAKER

A WOMAN and a little boy were walking down the steep, cobbled street of a village. If they kept on walking for three miles, they would come to a town, where there was a house which they wanted to find. They had seen the address in the advertisement column of the evening paper.

The woman was young. She was short—only about five feet in height—and she had small feet, of which she was very proud. The little boy had large, hazel eyes, both timid and thoughtful. He held his mother's hand. The two of them had the same expression of joyous solemnity; they were going to buy something.

The husband of the woman was called Theakstone Morphett. He was older than his wife, and worked in a stone quarry as a trimmer. He had sandy hair, and, as he only shaved once a week, on Saturdays, a growth of whisker and beard of the same glinting colour. His face was brick-red from exposure. He was a big-built man, without very much flesh, and he had a harsh, growling voice which frightened his son.

His wife had never been able to call him by his Christian name, Theakstone. It seemed to her silly, so she called him 'the father'. In the early days of her marriage, she had referred to him as 'he', or, when driven into a corner, as 'the master', but she did not like to say this often, as it was too true. She seemed thankful when her child was born, as she could at last call her husband something definite.

As the little boy, whom she christened Henry, became able to talk, he, too, referred to this man as 't'father'. The family

lived in the end house of the row, where the rough road wound up to the quarries, and beyond that to the moors; and when the little boy, who was playing at some mysterious game of his, alone, saw the big man coming into sight, slowly swinging his yellow corduroy trousers with their funny, belted legs, he would run up the steps crying, 'Mother, 'ere's t'father!'

Henry could not quite make up his mind about 't 'father'. The house was certainly better and quieter without this man, who sprawled in the high-backed wooden chair that had the goatskin tied over the top of it, and looked discontentedly at his small son; who often let it be known that he would have preferred a big, fat, rollicking, sandy baby to this quiet creature with questioning eyes.

But there was no need to trouble much, there were too many interesting things in the world. Every Monday was washday. Even when he was a tiny baby, Henry's mother would take him down into the cellar kitchen, underneath the living kitchen, where there was a brick-built copper for boiling the clothes in. She would light the fire with yellow-burning twigs, then a very little coal, and some coke, and soon there would be plenty of hot, soapy water. As soon as he was old enough, she would give him a little water in a pail, and let him pretend to wash something—one of the red, spotted handkerchiefs which 't' father' took his dinner in, or even his own blue and red striped shirt. And he would kneel on the stone-flagged floor, rubbing away, sometimes looking out through the small window with the flat grating above it. When he got tired of that, he would watch his mother bending over the great wooden tub, as she lifted out garments and rinsed them, and threw them with more or less accurate aim into the open mouth of the copper.

He could not bear to be far away from his mother; she was the only real part of his world. There were other children of

the same age living near, but he did not feel the want of a playmate. Each Sunday his mother would take him to the tiny stone chapel, where they sat on plain, wooden forms, which had lengths of red baize upon them. The forms were slippery, and sometimes the baize would writhe noiselessly to the floor.

Everything at the chapel was delightful. There was a hanging chandelier filled with gas-burners which had to be lighted, one by one, with a taper at the end of a pole, if ever the day grew too dark for the preacher to see. There was a pulpit with two lots of stairs running down from it, so that you could walk in at one side, and out of the other, if you were the preacher, and you wanted to. But the best thing of all was the music.

A harmonium was all they could afford at the chapel, and an elderly, very kind-faced woman played it. She sat with her back to the congregation, because she had no self-consciousness at all. She would slip on to the round stool in front of it, the gathers on her thick and proper skirt oozing gently over the edges; her feet would press firmly on the pedals, she would work them once or twice to fill the bellows with air, then the music would come.

The boy and his mother loved it. They sang the hymns loudly. There was one they often had. 'Toiling on,' they would sing, and the harmonium seemed to add, 'Ha, ha, ha! Toiling on! Ha, ha, ha!' It was worth coming to hear, however wet the day.

Once there had been a tea at the chapel, and they had both gone. The wooden forms were now arranged round long trestle tables. Plates of potted-meat sandwiches, buns, biscuits and sweet cakes stood above the short or long, old or new table cloths that had been lent. There was a huge copper tea-urn at the top, and great cups of tea were passed from hand to hand down the long expanse of table. Someone started singing 'Be present at our table, Lord.' How they dragged it out! It seemed

ages to the little boy, who had been so excited all day that he had hardly been able to eat his breakfast or dinner, and now wanted very much to begin. All the time they stood up, singing, he kept looking at the sandwich he had secretly chosen to start with; but directly grace was over, an old man with a long grey beard leaned over and almost snatched it. So the little boy sat sad and downcast, and it was a long time before he ate anything.

Although the tea had not been very pleasant, something happened afterwards which changed the whole evening. There was a small-cloak room just inside the chapel, and on the day of the tea, the precious harmonium had been moved into this place to give more room in the main hall. Here the boy found it. Furtively he tried the lid. It was open. His heart beat quickly as he put his hand on the soft-falling ivory keys. How pleasant they felt! He pulled up the chair without a back—the one used for reaching up to the cloak-room light—and sat down to play on the silent keys.

Soon he got tired of this, and began to press the pedals. As he heard the rushing sound of the air, he touched a note. It sounded loud, but the piled hats and coats all round seemed to confine the noise to this one little room. Outside, there was a confused murmur of people talking together. The tall, clean women, with their stiff white aprons and curled fringes, were clearing the long tables. He became a little bolder, and suddenly a tune played under his hand—'Toiling on! Ha, ha, ha!' He was frightened and happy, though however hard he tried, he could not get past the first line.

'Music!' he whispered; then he jumped up and went to look for his mother.

She was helping to wash up. He stood beside her, tugging at her skirt, and a strange woman bent over him and said, 'No boys allowed in here; go out.' He did not answer her, but stood impatiently there until his mother noticed him.

He said, 'I want to whisper.'

She put down the dishcloth she had been holding, smiling apologetically at the strange woman.

'Henry wants to go somewhere,' she told her.

He waited until they were in the main hall, with its chattering crowd. Then he said, 'Come and listen to me play the harmonium!'

Guiltily they stole into the cloak-room and closed the door. The boy had a pink colour in his face, he was excited.

'Listen!' he cried.

He pressed down his feet and played his tune with confidence. Over and over again he played the first line of 'Toiling on!'

His mother leaned near him like a young girl.

'Wait a minute!' she cried, 'try this for the second line.'

Between them miraculously, they found it. How happy they were! The noise grew louder, and their joy with it. When the door opened, and Miss Atlass—the playing lady—came in, there they froze into a picture of guilt, one sitting, the other half-standing.

'You mustn't touch the harmonium,' said Miss Atlass, not so gently as usual. She closed and locked it. They watched her, and did not say a word, only moved quietly away.

But, afterwards, at home, they had something new to talk about. They could recall the scene a hundred times, and never tire. And one day the little boy said dreamily, 'I wish we had some music.'

His mother had just taken the last loaf from the oven, and placed it on end on the baking board. She pushed the warm oven-cloth under her chin and stood there thinking. The little boy looked up at her, and smiled because she was smiling. Gradually her face grew bleak; she said, 'T'father 'ud never let us 'ave any in the 'ouse. 'E doesn't like it.'

After that, she had cheered up, and between them, they made

a secret. She was going to save up for a harmonium, and then they would go and buy one. It would be hard to save, because there was never much money! But she could try. Penny by penny, a little hoard grew.

Twice 't'father' nearly discovered their secret. Once, the pot in which he kept his paper spills—spells, he called them—was empty, and he was looking everywhere for some more; and once he was looking for somewhere to hide something himself. But luckily, he did not find the money. The little boy could hardly hold in his impatience, 'Can't we go now?' he would say, almost every day.

At last, the mother got the greengrocer, who called every Thursday, to change her pennies into shillings for her. There were not many, but she thought, 'We might get an old one, that didn't cost much, and I would pay a bit every time I could save it.' She had often read notices in the brokers' windows, 'Weekly payments taken.'

It was a mild, dull afternoon in early autumn when they walked down the street. As they passed Rumsden's Mill, there was the sound of clattering machinery. Mrs. Morphett had worked in a mill before she was married, and now a sudden yearning overcame her to be back among the racket of the machines. It was there she had dreamed her youthful dreams, which had not then included Theakstone Morphett. Fronting the road was a wooden door with a few holes in it, and she and the boy peered through them; they never passed without looking in. Nothing could be seen but wheels, whirling belts, and dust.

After they had looked as long as their excitement would let them, they straightened themselves and walked on, down to the valley, over the bridge by the old Venture, and up the other hillside. Mrs. Morphett held in one hand a purse, containing her money, and the advertisement which she had cut

out of the paper. It read, 'Musical instruments of all descriptions for sale. Unlimited choice. Apply 13, St. Leonard's Terrace.'

At last they arrived at St. Leonard's Terrace. For a long time the woman and her little boy did not dare to look for number thirteen, the road was so imposing. There were three-storied houses with big bay windows. Each had a small garden in front of it, with high, green painted railings. Who would live in such houses but gentlemen, they thought, and were almost certain they had been directed to the wrong address. Even as they lingered, an old man came out of the gate of number thirteen, carrying a shabby violin-case. He was muttering to himself as he passed them, and tremblingly buttoning up the top button of his coat. They watched him until he had turned the corner, then they opened the gate of thirteen, and walked up to the house entrance, and knocked.

In front of them was a large door, with a great amber-coloured knob on it. Henry stared at the knob, and thought it was so beautiful that for one moment he almost forgot the object of their visit. This door opened into a small, square hall, and beyond that was another door and a long passage. A tall, thin man with a black moustache answered their knock. Mrs. Morphett looked first at his waistcoat, then at her own small feet, but she did not say anything. The little boy stiffened. 'Please have you got...' he began, but hearing his own voice, which sounded very loud, he fell silent.

'Come forward,' said the man, speaking in a deep, rich voice. They went forward only as far as the square hall, and stopped. 'Follow me,' he continued still in the same deep tones, and they followed him down the passage into a large, uncarpeted room. There he left them, after saying, 'Pray excuse me, I will be back in a second.'

They stood in the dark back room, amid a profusion of

fiddles, harps, pianos, and all shapes and sizes of musical instruments. They did not dare to move, and stood very quiet, almost holding their breath, until the man returned.

The little boy felt very proud of his mother as she looked up into the face of the dark gentleman and said, 'How much is the harmoniums?' She even managed to smile, a small, terrified smile. He thought she looked very pretty.

As soon as she heard the price, she turned and made for the door, pulling the reluctant child with her; but before they could reach it, somehow the dark gentleman was in their way. He began to smile and talk to them, he did not want them to go without buying something. He showed them a square yellow box, covered with painted red flowers. 'This,' he said, 'migh tbe something more in your line?'

As he spoke, he lifted the box on to an old packing-case, pushed into it a roll of perforated paper, and began to turn a handle. The boy and the woman stood as stiff as statues, but entranced. Beside this, a harmonium was nothing! The first tinkling tune it played was 'The Minstrel Boy', which Mrs. Morphett had learned long ago at school. She nodded her head and began to hum, her eyes shining.

'What is it, mother?' whispered the little boy.

'It's a music-box,' said his mother, 'and if it isn't too dear, we'll buy it.'

She imagined it playing for ever in the kitchen at home. They would put it on the end of the dresser, and treat it so carefully. When the grey, driving rain poured past the window, and the wind howled down from the moor, there it would be, ready to put heart into them; and afterwards, when Henry went to school—she could not bear to face that day, though it was already so near—it would always be a magnet to draw him safely back.

The man, who had been considering a price, smoothed down

his moustache, and looked at them dubiously. He had intended to ask five shillings, but he put another shilling on for luck. In one corner of the room a violin-string snapped, and they all started.

'You can have it for six shillings,' he said, 'and the tunes alone are worth that.'

The mother and son looked at each other, he hopefully, she happily, then they both looked at the dark gentleman, who was stifling a yawn. And a few minutes afterwards they passed again the iron railings of numbers eleven, nine, seven, five, three and one, the woman carrying a large box inadequately wrapped, as if it were a holy thing.

They seemed to reach home in a moment. How well the box fitted its corner of the dresser, how the red flowers on its lid winked in the fire-light! They played several tunes before they took off their outdoor things. His mother turned the handle while the little boy sat on his chair looking at her with solemn, ecstatic eyes. They were both serious, grave, and spoke little. Once the mother said in a sharp, defiant voice, 'You sh'll 'ave an 'armonium next year,' although she knew it was next to impossible. The harmonium did not seem to matter so much now.

All at once they heard footsteps.

'It's t'father!' said the boy, in dismay. There was no meal ready for him.

They jumped up and ran to the door, looking like two children, flushed and happy. The little boy boldly took hold of one yellow trouser leg and cried, 'Father, father!' The man said 'Wheer's my tea?'

'It won't be a minute.' His wife pushed the kettle into the heart of the fire and hurriedly put some things on the table.

The father seemed to be annoyed about something. He had lost a shilling that afternoon. It was not often that he put money

on a horse, and, almost without exception, he lost. But he never gave up hoping that next time it would come off at a long price. All at once his glance fell on the music-box.

'What's that contraption?' he growled.

Looking at him, the little boy began to whimper. It came over him that his father was possessed of power, and that he would use it cruelly. The mother seemed to feel that way too. Shading her face with the teapot, she stood waiting for the kettle to boil. She had the look of a child waiting to be whipped.

'Come on, let's be knowin'. What's that contraption?' He was proud of the long word.

'It's—it's a music-box,' she said, almost inaudibly.

He looked at it dully.

The little boy watched his father's face. Then, still whimpering, he dragged a stool to the edge of the dresser, stood up on it, and began to turn the handle.

The man listened for a minute, then a heavy anger settled on his face. 'Shut that row!' he shouted, standing up and waving his arms. ''Oo brought that blasted thing into the 'ouse?'

The little boy stopped turning and as he looked at the father, the bright colour ran out of his face, leaving only a sickly pallor around his two staring dark eyes. The lid of the kettle began to shake, but the mother did not pour the boiling water into the teapot.

'I brought it,' she said. She was as white as the little boy.

'Well, you can take it back,' said the man. He kept looking at the box indignantly as if it had done him some injury.

The water from the kettle began to splash on to the fire, and that was the only sound to be heard in the room.

As soon as the man had set off to his work the next morning the woman slowly dressed to go out. She buttoned the boy into his overcoat, and opened the door. There was a fog, and they

both coughed as they stepped out into the street. They had not been able to eat any breakfast, and they shivered in the chill morning air. The woman carried the music-box, wrapped and ready to go back. She had cried until she was weary, and so had the little boy. They had asked again to be allowed to keep the music-box, had promised that it shouldn't be played when 't 'father' was in, but he simply said, 'Tek it back.' He could not see why his wife and son should want music when he did not.

The two walked very slowly, as the box seemed heavy. The mother was ashamed. She did not know how to approach the tall, dark gentleman; she was afraid he would not give her her money back. There was only one bright spot. She had not told her husband that the thing was paid for. Indeed, she had not had the chance, and the boy had clung to her dress, quietly, all the time her husband had shouted.

They stopped often to rest, but at last, once more, they were in St. Leonard's Terrace. The tall houses were wrapped in fog, water dripped from the trees with their few twisted leaves, and the pavements were so greasy that many times they slipped and almost fell.

As his mother timidly knocked at the door the little boy wiped the moisture from the amber-coloured knob, so that he could better see it. In doing so, he turned it, and the door opened softly beneath his hand. There was not a sound to be heard. He turned to his mother, looking up at her humbly, out of his swollen eyes. She seemed to understand him. Pushing open the door with her arm, she carefully lowered the parcel on to the floor of the little square hall, then she gently closed the door. Very soon the two figures had vanished in the fog.

NOTES

Cobbled streets: streets paved with round stones.

Driven into a corner: put in a difficult position from which there is no escape.

Rollicking: full of good humour; making much noise.

Rinse: put clothes through clean water to remove soap.

Forms: long, hard, wooden seats, generally without back.

Writhe: roll about in a twisting manner.

Congregation: persons who come together in church.

Gathers: gathered parts of dress.

Trestle: separate wood support for table top, etc.

Grace: short prayer said before and after meals.

Furtively: secretly.

Froze: became stiff.

Bleak: cold.

Broker: middleman in business bargains who buys and sells goods.

Racket: great noise.

Perforate: make lines of holes through paper.

Entranced: overcome with pleasure.

Wink: shut one eye; *here,* shine.

Contraption: strange-looking machine.

THE GARDEN-PARTY

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

AND after all the weather was ideal. They could not have had a more perfect day for a garden-party if they had ordered it. Windless, warm, the sky without a cloud. Only the blue was veiled with a haze of light gold, as it is sometimes in early summer. The gardener had been up since dawn, mowing the lawns and sweeping them, until the grass and the dark flat rosettes where the daisy plants had been seemed to shine. As for the roses, you could not help feeling they understood that roses are the only flowers that impress people at garden-parties; the only flowers that everybody is certain of knowing. Hundreds, yes, literally hundreds, had come out in a single night; the green bushes bowed down as though they had been visited by archangels.

Breakfast was not yet over before the men came to put up the marquee.

'Where do you want the marquee put, mother?'

'My dear child, it's no use asking me. I'm determined to leave everything to you children this year. Forget I am your mother. Treat me as an honoured guest.'

But Meg could not possibly go and supervise the men. She had washed her hair before breakfast and she sat drinking her coffee in a green turban, with a dark wet curl stamped on each cheek. Jose, the butterfly, always came down in a silk petticoat and a kimono jacket.

'You'll have to go, Laura; you're the artistic one.'

Away Laura flew, still holding her piece of bread-and-butter. It's so delicious to have an excuse for eating out of doors and, besides, she loved having to arrange things; she always felt

she could do it so much better than anybody else.

Four men in their shirt-sleeves stood grouped together on the garden path. They carried staves covered with rolls of canvas and they had big tool-bags slung on their backs. They looked impressive. Laura wished now that she was not holding that piece of bread-and-butter, but there was nowhere to put it and she couldn't possibly throw it away. She blushed and tried to look severe and even a little bit short-sighted as she came up to them.

'Good morning,' she said, copying her mother's voice. But that sounded so fearfully affected that she was ashamed, and stammered like a little girl, 'Oh—er—have you come—is it about the marquee?'

'That's right, miss,' said the tallest of the men, a lanky, freckled fellow, and he shifted his tool-bag, knocked back his straw hat and smiled down at her. 'That's about it.'

His smile was so easy, so friendly, that Laura recovered. What nice eyes he had, small but such a dark blue! And now she looked at the others, they were smiling, too. 'Cheer up, we won't bite,' their smile seemed to say. How very nice workmen were! And what a beautiful morning! She mustn't mention the morning; she must be business-like. The marquee.

'Well, what about the lily-lawn? Would that do?'

And she pointed to the lily-lawn with the hand that didn't hold the bread-and-butter. They turned, they stared in the direction. A little fat chap thrust out his underlip and the tall fellow frowned.

'I don't fancy it,' said he. 'Not conspicuous enough. You see, with a thing like a marquee'—and he turned to Laura in his easy way—' you want to put it somewhere where it'll give you a bang slap in the eye, if you follow me.'

Laura's upbringing made her wonder for a moment whether it was quite respectful of a workman to talk to her of bangs

slap in the eye. But she did quite follow him.

'A corner of the tennis-court,' she suggested. 'But the band's going to be in one corner.'

'H'm, going to have a band, are you?' said another of the workmen. He was pale. He had a haggard look as his dark eyes scanned the tennis-court. What was he thinking?

'Only a very small band,' said Laura gently. Perhaps he wouldn't mind so much if the band was quite small. But the tall fellow interrupted.

'Look here, miss, that's the place. Against those trees. Over there. That'll do fine.'

Against the karakas. Then the karaka trees would be hidden. And they were so lovely, with their broad, gleaming leaves, and their clusters of yellow fruit. They were like trees you imagined growing on a desert island, proud, solitary, lifting their leaves and fruits to the sun in a kind of silent splendour. Must they be hidden by a marquee?

They must. Already the men had shouldered their staves and were making for the place. Only the tall fellow was left. He bent down, pinched a sprig of lavender, put his thumb and forefinger to his nose and snuffed up the smell. When Laura saw that gesture she forgot all about the karakas in her wonder at him caring for things like that—caring for the smell of lavender. How many men that she knew would have done such a thing. Oh, how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought. Why couldn't she have workmen for friends rather than the silly boys she danced with and who came to Sunday night supper? She would get on much better with men like these.

It's all the fault, she decided, as the tall fellow drew something on the back of an envelope, something that was to be looped up or left to hang, of these absurd class distinctions. Well, for her part, she didn't feel them. Not a bit, not an atom... And

now there came the chock-chock of wooden hammers. Someone whistled, someone sang out, 'Are you right there, matey?' 'Matey!' The friendliness of it, the—the—just to prove how happy she was, just to show the tall fellow how at home she felt, and how she despised stupid conventions, Laura took a big bite of her bread-and-butter as she stared at the little drawing. She felt just like a work-girl.

'Laura, Laura, where are you? Telephone, Laura!' a voice cried from the house.

'Coming!' Away she skimmed, over the lawn, up the path, up the steps, across the veranda and into the porch. In the hall her father and Laurie were brushing their hats ready to go to the office.

'I say, Laura,' said Laurie very fast, 'you might just give a squiz at my coat before this afternoon. See if it wants pressing.'

'I will,' said she. Suddenly she couldn't stop herself. She ran at Laurie and gave him a small, quick squeeze. 'Oh, I do love parties, don't you?' gasped Laura.

'Ra-ther,' said Laurie's warm, boyish voice, and he squeezed his sister too and gave her a gentle push. 'Dash off to the telephone, old girl.'

The telephone. 'Yes, yes; oh yes, Kitty! Good morning, dear. Come to lunch? Do, dear. Delighted, of course. It will only be a very scratch meal—just the sandwich crusts and broken meringue-shells and what's left over. Yes, isn't it a perfect morning? Your white? Oh, I certainly should. One moment—hold the line. Mother's calling.' And Laura sat back. 'What, mother? Can't hear.'

Mrs. Sheridan's voice floated down the stairs. 'Tell her to wear that sweet hat she had on last Sunday.'

'Mother says you're to wear that *sweet* hat you had on last Sunday. Good. One o'clock. Bye-bye.'

Laura put back the receiver, flung her arms over her head,

took a deep breath, stretched and let them fall. 'Huh,' she sighed, and the moment after the sigh she sat up quickly. She was still, listening. All the doors in the house seemed to be open. The house was alive with soft, quick steps and running voices. The green baize door that led to the kitchen regions swung open and shut with a muffled thud. And now there came a long chuckling absurd sound. It was the heavy piano being moved on its stiff castors. But the air! If you stopped to notice, was the air always like this? Little faint winds were playing chase in at the tops of the windows, out at the doors. And there were two tiny spots of sun, one on the inkpot, one on a silver photograph frame, playing too. Darling little spots. Especially the one on the inkpot lid. It was quite warm. A warm little silver star. She could have kissed it.

The front door bell pealed and there sounded the rustle of Sadie's print skirt on the stairs. A man's voice murmured; Sadie answered, careless, 'I'm sure I don't know. Wait. I'll ask Mrs. Sheridan.'

'What is it, Sadie?' Laura came into the hall.

'It's the florist, Miss Laura.'

It was, indeed. There, just inside the door, stood a wide, shallow tray full of pots of pink lilies. No other kind. Nothing but lilies—canna lilies, big pink flowers, wide open, radiant, almost frighteningly alive on bright crimson stems.

'O-oh, Sadie!' said Laura, and the sound was like a little moan. She crouched down as if to warm herself at that blaze of lilies; she felt they were in her fingers, on her lips, growing in her breast.

'It's some mistake,' she said faintly. 'Nobody ever ordered so many. Sadie, go and find mother.'

But at that moment Mrs. Sheridan joined them.

'It's quite right,' she said calmly. 'Yes, I ordered them. Aren't they lovely?' She pressed Laura's arm. 'I was passing

the shop yesterday, and I saw them in the window. And I suddenly thought for once in my life I shall have enough canna lilies. The garden-party will be a good excuse.'

'But I thought you said you didn't mean to interfere,' said Laura. Sadie had gone. The florist's man was still outside at his van. She put her arm round her mother's neck and gently, very gently, she bit her mother's ear.

'My darling child, you wouldn't like a logical mother, would you? Don't do that. Here's the man.'

He carried more lilies still, another whole tray.

'Bank them up, just inside the door, on both sides of the porch, please,' said Mrs. Sheridan. 'Don't you agree, Laura?'

'Oh, I *do*, mother.'

In the drawing-room Meg, Jose and good little Hans had at last succeeded in moving the piano.

'Now, if we put this chesterfield against the wall and move everything out of the room except the chairs, don't you think?'

'Quite.'

'Hans, move these tables into the smoking-room and bring a sweeper to take these marks off the carpet and—one moment, Hans—' Jose loved giving orders to the servants and they loved obeying her. She always made them feel they were taking part in some drama. 'Tell mother and Miss Laura to come here at once.'

'Very good, Miss Jose.'

She turned to Meg. 'I want to hear what the piano sounds like, just in case I'm asked to sing this afternoon. Let's try over "This Life is Weary."'

Pom! Ta-ta-ta *Tee*-ta! The piano burst out so passionately that Jose's face changed. She clasped her hands. She looked mournfully and enigmatically at her mother and Laura as they came in.

This Life is *Wee*-ary,

A Tear—a Sigh.
A Love that *Chan*-ges,
This Life is *Wee*-ary,
A Tear—a Sigh.
A Love that *Chan*-ges
And then... Good-bye!

But at the word 'Good-bye', and although the piano sounded more desperate than ever, her face broke into a brilliant, dreadfully unsympathetic smile.

'Arent't I in good voice, mummy?' she beamed.

This Life is *Wee*-ary,
Hope comes to Die.
A Dream—a *Wa*-kening.

But now Sadie interrupted them. 'What is it, Sadie?'

'If you please, m'm, cook says have you got the flags for the sandwiches?'

'The flags for the sandwiches, Sadie?' echoed Mrs. Sheridan dreamily. And the children knew by her face that she hadn't got them. 'Let me see.' And she said to Sadie firmly. 'Tell cook I'll let her have them in ten minutes.'

Sadie went.

'Now, Laura,' said her mother quickly, 'come with me into the smoking-room. I've got the names somewhere on the back of an envelope. You'll have to write them out for me. Meg, go upstairs this minute and take that wet thing off your head. Jose, run and finish dressing this instant. Do you hear me, children, or shall I have to tell your father when he comes home to-night? And—and, Jose, pacify cook if you do go into the kitchen, will you? I'm terrified of her this morning.'

The envelope was found at last behind the dining-room clock, though how it had got there Mrs. Sheridan could not imagine.

'One of you children must have stolen it out of my bag, because I remember vividly—cream-cheese and lemon-curd.

Have you done that?'

'Yes.'

'Egg and—' Mrs. Sheridan held the envelope away from her. 'It looks like mice. It can't be mice, can it?'

'Olive, pet,' said Laura, looking over her shoulder.

'Yes, of course, olive. What a horrible combination it sounds. Egg and olive.'

They were finished at last, and Laura took them off to the kitchen. She found Jose there pacifying the cook, who did not look at all terrifying.

'I have never seen such exquisite sandwiches,' said Jose's rapturous voice. 'How many kinds did you say there were, cook? Fifteen?'

'Fifteen, Miss Jose.'

'Well, cook, I congratulate you.'

Cook swept up crusts with the long sandwich knife, and smiled broadly.

'Godber's has come,' announced Sadie, issuing out of the pantry. She had seen the man pass the window.

That meant the cream puffs had come. Godber's were famous for their cream puffs. Nobody ever thought of making them at home.

'Bring them in and put them on the table, my girl,' ordered cook.

Sadie brought them in and went back to the door. Of course Laura and Jose were far too grown-up to really care about such things. All the same, they couldn't help agreeing that the puffs looked very attractive. Very. Cook began arranging them, shaking off the extra icing sugar.

'Don't they carry one back to all one's parties?' said Laura.

'I suppose they do,' said practical Jose, who never liked to be carried back. 'They look beautifully light and feathery, I must say.'

'Have one each, my dears,' said cook in her comfortable voice. 'Yer ma won't know.'

Oh, impossible. Fancy cream puffs so soon after breakfast. The very idea made one shudder. All the same, two minutes later Jose and Laura were licking their fingers with that absorbed inward look that only comes from whipped cream.

'Let's go into the garden, out by the back way,' suggested Laura. 'I want to see how the men are getting on with the marquee. They're such awfully nice men.'

But the back door was blocked by cook, Sadie, Godber's man and Hans,

Something had happened.

'Tuk-tuk-tuk,' clucked cook like an agitated hen. Sadie had her hand clapped to her cheek as though she had toothache. Hans's face was screwed up in the effort to understand. Only Godber's man seemed to be enjoying himself; it was his story.

'What's the matter? What's happened?'

'There's been a horrible accident,' said cook. 'A man killed.'

'A man killed! Where? How? When?'

But Godber's man wasn't going to have his story snatched from under his very nose.

'Know those little cottages just below here, miss?' Know them? Of course she knew them. 'Well, there's a young chap living there, name of Scott, a carter. His horse shied at a traction engine, corner of Hawke Street this morning, and he was thrown out on the back of his head. Killed.'

'Dead!' Laura stared at Godber's man.

'Dead when they picked him up,' said Godber's man with relish. 'They were taking the body home as I come up here.' And he said to the cook, 'He's left a wife and five little ones.'

'Jose, come here.' Laura caught hold of her sister's sleeve and dragged her through the kitchen to the other side of the green

baize door. There she paused and leaned against it. 'Jose!' she said, horrified, however are we going to stop everything?'

'Stop everything, Laura!' cried Jose in astonishment. 'What do you mean?'

'Stop the garden-party, of course.' Why did Jose pretend?

But Jose was still more amazed. 'Stop the garden-party? My dear Laura, don't be so absurd. Of course we can't do anything of the kind. Nobody expects us to. Don't be so extravagant.'

'But we can't possibly have a garden-party with a man dead just outside the front gate.'

That really was extravagant, for the little cottages were in a lane to themselves at the very bottom of a steep rise that led up to the house. A broad road ran between. True, they were far too near. They were the greatest possible eyesore and they had no right to be in that neighbourhood at all. They were little mean dwellings painted a chocolate brown. In the garden patches there was nothing but cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato cans. The very smoke coming out of their chimneys was poverty-stricken. Little rags and shreds of smoke, so unlike the great silvery plumes that uncurled from the Sheridans' chimneys. Washerwomen lived in the lane and sweeps and a cobbler and a man whose house-front was studded all over with minute bird-cages. Children swarmed. When the Sheridans were little they were forbidden to set foot there because of the revolting language and of what they might catch. But since they were grown up Laura and Laurie on their prowls sometimes walked through. It was disgusting and sordid. They came out with a shudder. But still one must go everywhere; one must see everything. So through they went.

'And just think of what the band would sound like to that poor woman,' said Laura.

'Oh, Laura!' Jose began to be seriously annoyed. 'If you're going to stop a band playing every time someone has an accid-

ent, you'll lead a very strenuous life. I'm every bit as sorry about it as you. I feel just as sympathetic.' Her eyes hardened. She looked at her sister just as she used to when they were little and fighting together. 'You won't bring a drunken workman back to life by being sentimental,' she said softly.

'Drunk! Who said he was drunk?' Laura turned furiously on Jose. She said just as they had used to say, on those occasions, 'I'm going straight up to tell mother.'

'Do, dear,' cooed Jose.

'Mother, can I come into your room?' Laura turned the big glass door-knob.

'Of course, child. Why, what's the matter? What's given you such a colour?' And Mrs. Sheridan turned round from her dressing table. She was trying on a new hat.

'Mother, a man's been killed,' began Laura.

'*Not* in the garden?' interrupted her mother.

'No, no!'

'Oh, what a fright you gave me!' Mrs. Sheridan sighed with relief and took off the big hat and held it on her knees.

'But listen, mother,' said Laura. Breathless, half choking, she told the dreadful story. 'Of course, we can't have our party, can we?' she pleaded. 'The band and everybody arriving. They'd hear us, mother; they're nearly neighbours!'

To Laura's astonishment her mother behaved just like Jose; it was harder to bear because she seemed amused. She refused to take Laura seriously.

'But, my dear child, use your common sense. It's only by accident we've heard of it. If someone had died there normally—and I can't understand how they keep alive in those poky little holes—we should still be having our party, shouldn't we?'

Laura had to say 'yes' to that, but she felt it was all wrong. She sat down on her mother's sofa and pinched the cushion frill.

'Mother, isn't it really terribly heartless of us?' she asked.

'Darling!' Mrs. Sheridan got up and came over to her, carrying the hat. Before Laura could stop her she had popped it on. 'My child!' said her mother, 'the hat is yours. It's made for you. It's much too young for me. I have never seen you look such a picture. Look at yourself!' And she held up her hand-mirror.

'But, mother,' Laura began again. She couldn't look at herself; she turned aside.

This time Mrs. Sheridan lost patience just as Jose had done. 'You are being very absurd, Laura,' she said coldly. 'People like that don't expect sacrifices from us. And it's not very sympathetic to spoil everybody's enjoyment as you're doing now.'

'I don't understand,' said Laura, and she walked quickly out of the room into her own bedroom. There, quite by chance, the first thing she saw was this charming girl in the mirror, in her black hat trimmed with gold daisies and a long black velvet ribbon. Never had she imagined she could look like that. Is mother right? she thought. And now she hoped her mother was right. Am I being extravagant? Perhaps it was extravagant. Just for a moment she had another glimpse of that poor woman and those little children and the body being carried into the house. But it all seemed blurred, unreal, like a picture in the newspaper. I'll remember it again after the party's over, she decided. And somehow that seemed quite the best plan...'

Lunch was over by half-past one. By half-past two they were all ready for the fray. The green-coated band had arrived and was established in a corner of the tennis-court.

'My dear!' trilled Kitty Maitland, 'aren't they too like frogs for words? You ought to have arranged them round the pond with the conductor in the middle on a leaf.'

Laurie arrived and hailed them on his way to dress. At the sight of him Laura remembered the accident again. She wanted

to tell him. If Laurie agreed with the others, then it was bound to be all right. And she followed him into the hall.

'Laurie!'

'Hallo!' He was half-way upstairs, but when he turned round and saw Laura he suddenly puffed out his cheeks and goggled his eyes at her. 'My word, Laura! You do look stunning,' said Laurie. 'What an absolutely topping hat!'

Laura said faintly 'Is it?' and smiled up at Laurie and didn't tell him after all.

Soon after that people began coming in streams. The band struck up; the hired waiters ran from the house to the marquee. Wherever you looked there were couples strolling, bending to the flowers, greeting, moving on over the lawn. They were like bright birds that had alighted in the Sheridans' garden for this one afternoon, on their way to—where? Ah, what happiness it is to be with people who all are happy, to press hands, press cheeks, smile into eyes.

'Darling Laura, how well you look!'

'What a becoming hat, child!'

'Laura, you look quite Spanish. I've never seen you look so striking.'

And Laura, glowing, answered softly, 'Have you had tea? Won't you have an ice? The passion-fruit ices really are rather special.' She ran to her father and begged him. 'Daddy darling, can't the band have something to drink?'

And the perfect afternoon slowly ripened, slowly faded, slowly its petals closed.

'Never a more delightful garden-party...' 'The greatest success...' 'Quite the most...'

Laura helped her mother with the good-byes. They stood side by side in the porch till it was all over.

'All over, all over, thank heaven,' said Mrs. Sheridan. 'Round up the others, Laura. Let's go and have some fresh coffee. I'm

exhausted. Yes, it's been very successful. But oh, these parties, these parties! Why will you children insist on giving parties!' And they all of them sat down in the deserted marquee.

'Have a sandwich, daddy dear. I wrote the flag.'

'Thanks.' Mrs. Sheridan took a bite and the sandwich was gone. He took another. 'I suppose you didn't hear of a beastly accident that happened to-day?' he said.

'My dear,' said Mrs. Sheridan, holding up her hand, 'we did. It nearly ruined the party. Laura insisted we should put it off.'

'Oh, mother!' Laura didn't want to be teased about it.

'It was a horrible affair all the same,' said Mr. Sheridan. 'The chap was married too. Lived just below in the lane, and leaves a wife and half a dozen kiddies, so they say.'

An awkward little silence fell. Mrs. Sheridan fidgeted with her cup. Really, it was very tactless of father...

Suddenly she looked up. There on the table were all those sandwiches, cakes, puffs, all uneaten, all going to be wasted. She had one of her brilliant ideas.

'I know,' she said, 'Let's make up a basket. Let's send that poor creature some of this perfectly good food. At any rate, it will be the greatest treat for the children. Don't you agree? And she's sure to have neighbours calling in and so on. What a point to have it all ready prepared, Laura!' She jumped up. 'Get me the big basket out of the stairs cupboard.'

'But, mother, do you really think it's a good idea?' said Laura.

Again, how curious, she semed to be different from them all. To take scraps from their party. Would the poor woman really like that?

'Of course! What's the matter with you to-day? An hour or two ago you were insisting on us being sympathetic.'

Oh well! Laura ran for the basket. It was filled, it was now

heaped by her mother.

'Take it yourself, darling,' said she. 'Run down just as you are. No, wait, take the arum lilies too. People of that class are so impressed by arum lilies.'

'The stems will ruin her lace frock,' said practical Jose.

So they would. Just in time. 'Only the basket, then. And Laura!'—her mother followed her out of the marquee—'don't on any account—'

'What, mother?'

No, better not put such ideas into the child's head! 'Nothing! Run along.'

It was just growing dusky as Laura shut their garden gates. A big dog ran by like a shadow. The road gleamed white, and down below in the hollow the little cottages were in deep shade. How quiet it seemed after the afternoon. Here she was going down the hill to somewhere where a man lay dead, and she couldn't realize it. Why couldn't she? She stopped a minute. And it seemed to her that kisses, voices, tinkling spoons, laughter, the smell of crushed grass were somehow inside her. She had no room for anything else. How strange! She looked up at the pale sky, and all she thought was, 'Yes, it was the most successful party.'

Now the broad road was crossed. The lane began, smoky and dark. Women in shawls and men's tweed caps hurried by. Men hung over the palings; the children played in the doorways. A low hum came from the mean little cottages. In some of them there was a flicker of light, and a shadow, crab-like, moved across the window. Laura bent her head and hurried on. She wished now she had put on a coat. How her frock shone! And the big hat with the velvet streamer—if only it was another hat! Were the people looking at her? They must be. It was a mistake to have come; she knew all along it was a mistake. Should she go back even now?

No, too late. This was the house. It must be. A dark knot of people stood outside. Beside the gate an old, old woman with a crutch sat in a chair, watching. She had her feet on a newspaper. The voices stopped as Laura drew near. The group parted. It was though she was expected, as though they had known she was coming here.

Laura was terribly nervous. Tossing the velvet ribbon over her shoulder, she said to a woman standing by, 'Is this Mrs. Scott's house?' and the woman, smiling queerly, said, 'It is, my lass.'

Oh, to be away from this! She actually said, 'Help me, God,' as she walked up the tiny path and knocked. To be away from those staring eyes, or to be covered up in anything, one of those women's shawls even. I'll just leave the basket and go, she decided. I shan't even wait for it to be emptied.

Then the door opened. A little woman in black showed in the gloom.

Laura said, 'Are you Mrs. Scott?' But to her horror the woman answered, 'Walk in, please, miss,' and she was shut in the passage.

'No,' said Laura, 'I don't want to come in. I only want to leave this basket. Mother sent—'

The little woman in the gloomy passage seemed not to have heard her. 'Step this way, please, miss,' she said in an oily voice, and Laura followed her.

She found herself in a wretched little low kitchen, lighted by a smoky lamp. There was a woman sitting before the fire.

'Em,' said the little creature who had let her in. 'Em! It's a young lady.' She turned to Laura. She said meaningly, 'I'm 'er sister, miss. You'll excuse 'er, won't you?'

'Oh, but of course!' said Laura. 'Please, please don't disturb her. I—I only want to leave—'

But at that moment the woman at the fire turned round. Her

face puffed up, red, with swollen eyes and swollen lips, looked terrible. She seemed as though she couldn't understand why Laura was there. What did it mean? Why was this stranger standing in the kitchen with a basket? What was it all about? And the poor face puckered up again.

'All right, my dear,' said the other. 'I'll thank the young lady.'

And again she began, 'You'll excuse her, miss, I'm sure,' and her face, swollen too, tried an oily smile.

Laura only wanted to get out, to get away. She was back in the passage. The door opened. She walked straight through into the bedroom, where the dead man was lying.

'You'd like to look at 'im, wouldn't you?' said Em's sister, and she brushed past Laura over to the bed. 'Don't be afraid, my lass'—and now her voice sounded fond and sly, and fondly shedrew down the sheet—' 'e looks a picture. There's nothing to show. Come along, my dear.'

Laura came.

There lay a young man, fast asleep—sleeping so soundly, so deeply, that he was far, far away from them both. Oh so remote, so peaceful. He was dreaming. Never wake him up again. His head was sunk in the pillow, his eyes were closed; they were blind under the closed eyelids. He was given up to his dream. What did garden-parties and baskets and lace frocks matter to him? He was far from all those things. He was wonderful, beautiful. While they were laughing and while the band was playing, this marvel had come to the lane. Happy .. happy... All is well, said that sleeping face. This is just as it should be. I am content.

But all the same you had to cry, and she couldn't go out of the room without saying something to him. Laura gave a loud childish sob.

'Forgive my hat,' she said.

And this time she didn't wait for Em's sister. She found her

way out of the door, down the path past all those dark people. At the corner of the lane she met Laurie.

He stepped out of the shadow. 'Is that you, Laura?'

'Yes.'

'Mother was getting anxious. Was it all right?'

'Yes, quite. Oh, Laurie!' She took his arm, she pressed up against him.

'I say, you're not crying, are you?' asked her brother.

Laura shook her head. She was.

Laurie put his arm round her shoulder. 'Don't cry,' he said in his warm, loving voice. 'Was it awful?'

'No,' sobbed Laura. 'It was simply marvellous. But, Laurie —' She stopped, she looked at her brother. 'Isn't life,' she stammered, 'isn't life—' But what life was she couldn't explain. No matter. He quite understood.

'*Isn't* it, darling?' said Laurie.

NOTES

Marquee: large tent.
Lanky: awkwardly tall and lean.
Freckled: having light brown spots on the skin.
Sprig: small branch.
Squiz: look or glance.
Scratch meal: meal put together in haste.
Meringue: confection of sugar, white of eggs, etc.
Enigmatically: in a puzzling manner.
Icing: sugar coating of cake, etc.
Extravagant: here, unreasonable.
Eyesore: a thing that is disagreeable to look at.
Sordid: mean, ignoble, base.
Poky: (of place or room) mean, shabby.
Fray: battle, *here* the ordeal of the garden-party.

Stunning: (*slang*) very beautiful.
Round up: gather, collect, or assemble.
Pucker: wrinkle.

THE DOOR IN THE WALL

H. G. WELLS

§ 1

One confidential evening, not three months ago, Lionel Wallace told me this story of the Door in the Wall. And at the time I thought that so far as he was concerned it was a true story.

He told it me with such a direct simplicity of conviction that I could not do otherwise than believe in him. But in the morning, in my own flat, I woke to a different atmosphere; and as I lay in bed and recalled the things he had told me, stripped of the glamour of his earnest slow voice, denuded of the focused, shaded table light, the shadowy atmosphere that wrapped about him and me, and the pleasant bright things, the dessert and glasses and napery of the dinner we had shared, making them for the time a bright little world quite cut off from everyday realities, I saw it all as frankly incredible. 'He was mystifying!' I said, and then: 'How well he did it!... It isn't quite the thing I should have expected him, of all people, to do well.'

Afterwards as I sat up in bed and sipped my morning tea, I found myself trying to account for the flavour of reality that perplexed me in his impossible reminiscences, by supposing they did in some way suggest, present, convey—I hardly know which word to use—experiences it was otherwise impossible to tell.

Well, I don't resort to that explanation now. I have got over my intervening doubts. I believe now, as I believed at the moment of telling, that Wallace did to the very best of his ability strip the truth of his secret for me. But whether he himself saw,

or only thought he saw, whether he himself was the possessor of an inestimable privilege or the victim of a fantastic dream, I cannot pretend to guess. Even the facts of his death, which ended my doubts for ever, throw no light on that.

That much the reader must judge for himself.

I forget now what chance comment or criticism of mine moved so reticent a man to confide in me. He was, I think, defending himself against an imputation of slackness and unreliability I had made in relation to a great public movement, in which he had disappointed me. But he plunged suddenly. 'I have,' he said, 'a preoccupation—

'I know,' he went on, after a pause, 'I have been negligent. The fact is—it isn't a case of ghosts or apparitions—but—it's an odd thing to tell of, Redmond—I am haunted. I am haunted by something—that rather takes the light out of things, that fills me with longings ...'

He paused, checked by that English shyness that so often overcomes us when we would speak of moving or grave or beautiful things. 'You were at Saint Althelstan's all through,' he said, and for a moment that seemed to me quite irrelevant. 'Well'—and he paused. Then very haltingly at first, but afterwards more easily, he began to tell of the thing that was hidden in his life, the haunting memory of a beauty and a happiness that filled his heart with insatiable longings, that made all the interests and spectacle of worldly life seem dull and tedious and vain to him.

Now that I have the clue to it, thing seems written visibly in his face. I have a photograph in which that look of detachment has been caught and intensified. It reminds me of what a woman once said of him—a woman who had loved him greatly. 'Suddenly,' she said, 'the interest goes out of him. He forgets you. He doesn't care a rap for you—under his very nose ...'

Yet the interest was not always out of him, and when he was

holding his attention to a thing Wallace could contrive to be an extremely successful man. His career, indeed, is set with success. He left me behind him long ago; he soared up over my head, and cut a figure in the world that I couldn't cut—anyhow. He was still a year short of forty, and they say now that he would have been in office and very probably in the new Cabinet if he had lived. At school he always beat me without effort—as it were by nature. We were at school together at Saint Althelstan's College in West Kensington for almost all our schooltime. He came into the school as my co-equal, but he left far above me, in a blaze of scholarships and brilliant performance. Yet I think I made a fair average running. And it was at school I heard first of the 'Door in the Wall'—that I was to hear of a second time only a month before his death.

To him at least the Door in the Wall was a real door, leading through a real wall to immortal realities. Of that I am now quite assured.

And it came into his life quite early, when he was a little fellow between five and six. I remember how, as he sat making his confession to me with a slow gravity, he reasoned and reckoned the date of it. 'There was,' he said, 'a crimson Virginia creeper in it—all one bright uniform crimson, in a clear amber sunshine against a white wall. That came into the impression somehow, though I don't clearly remember how, and there were horse-chestnut leaves upon the clean pavement outside the green door. They were blotched yellow and green you know, not brown nor dirty, so that they must have been new fallen. I take it that means October. I look out for horse-chestnut leaves every year and I ought to know.

'If I'm right in that, I was about five years and four months old.'

He was, he said, rather a precocious little boy—he learned to talk at an abnormally early age, and he was so sane and 'old-

fashioned' as people say, that he was permitted an amount of initiative that most children scarcely attain by seven or eight. His mother died when he was two, and he was under the less vigilant and authoritative care of a nursery governess. His father was a stern, preoccupied lawyer, who gave him little attention and expected great things of him. For all his brightness he found life grey and dull, I think. And one day he wandered.

He could not recall the particular neglect that enabled him to get away, nor the course he took among the West Kensington roads. All that had faded among the incurable blurs of memory. But the white wall and the green door stood out quite distinctly.

As his memory of that childish experience ran, he did at the very first sight of that door experience a peculiar emotion, an attraction, a desire to get to the door and open it and walk in. And at the same time he had the clearest conviction that either it was unwise or it was wrong of him—he could not tell which—to yield to this attraction. He insisted upon it as a curious thing that he knew from the very beginning—unless memory has played him the queerest trick—that the door was unfastened, and that he could go in as he chose.

I seem to see the figure of that little boy, drawn and repelled. And it was very clear in his mind, too, though why it should be so was never explained, that his father would be very angry if he went in through that door.

Wallace described all these moments of hesitation to me with the utmost particularity. He went right past the door, and then, with his hands in his pockets and making an infantile attempt to whistle, strolled right along beyond the end of the wall. There he recalls a number of mean dirty shops, and particularly that of a plumber and decorator with a dusty disorder of earthenware pipes, sheet lead, ball taps, pattern books of wall-paper, and tins of enamel. He stood pretending to examine

these things, and *coveting*, passionately desiring, the green door.

Then, he said, he had a gust of emotion. He made a run for it, lest hesitation should grip him again; he went plump with outstretched hand through the green door and let it slam behind him. And so, in a trice, he came into the garden that has haunted all his life.

It was very difficult for Wallace to give me his full sense of that garden into which he came.

There was something in the very air of it that exhilarated, that gave one a sense of lightness and good happening and well-being; there was something in the sight of it that made all its colour clean and perfect and subtly luminous. In the instant of coming into it one was exquisitely glad—as only in rare moments, and when one is young and joyful one can be glad in this world. And everything was beautiful there ...

Wallace mused before he went on telling me. 'You see,' he said, with the doubtful inflexion of a man who pauses at incredible things, 'there were two great panthers there... Yes, spotted panthers. And I was not afraid. There was a long wide path with marble-edged flower borders on either side, and these two huge velvety beasts were playing there with a ball. One looked up and came towards me, a little curious as it seemed. It came right up to me, rubbed its soft round ear very gently against the small hand I held out, and purred. It was, I tell you, an enchanted garden. I know. And the size? Oh! it stretched far and wide, this way and that. I believe there were hills far away. Heaven knows where West Kensington had suddenly got to. And somehow it was just like coming home.

'You know, in the very moment the door swung to behind me, I forgot the road with its fallen chestnut leaves, its cabs and tradesmen's carts, I forgot the sort of gravitational pull back to the discipline and obedience of home, I forgot all hesitations and fear, forgot discretion, forgot all the intimate realities

of this life. I became in a moment a very glad and wonder-happy little boy—in another world. It was a world with a different quality, a warmer, more penetrating and mellower light, with a faint clear gladness in its air, and wisps of sun-touched cloud in the blueness of its sky. And before me ran this long wide path, invitingly, with weedless beds on either side, rich with untended flowers, and these two great panthers. I put my little hands fearlessly on their soft fur, and caressed their round ears and the sensitive corners under their ears, and played with them, and it was as though they welcomed me home. There was a keen sense of home-coming in my mind, and when presently a tall, fair girl appeared in the pathway and came to meet me, smiling, and said "Well?" to me, and lifted me and kissed me, and put me down and led me by the hand, there was no amazement, but only an impression of delightful rightness, of being reminded of happy things that had in some strange way been overlooked. There were broad red steps, I remember, that came into view between spikes of delphinium, and up these we went to a great avenue between very old and shady dark trees. All down this avenue, you know, between the red chapped stems, were marble seats of honour and statuary, and very tame and friendly white doves...

'Along this cool avenue my girl-friend led me, looking down—I recall pleasant lines, the finely modelled chin of her sweet kind face—asking me questions in a soft, agreeable voice, and telling me things, pleasant things I know, though what they were I was never able to recall... Presently a Capuchin monkey, very clean with a fur of ruddy brown and kindly hazel eyes, came down a tree to us and ran beside me, looking up at me and grinning, and presently leaped to my shoulder. So we two went on our way in great happiness.'

He paused.

'Go on,' I said.

'I remember little things. We passed an old man musing among laurels, I remember, and a place gay with paroquets, and came through a broad shaded colonnade to a spacious cool palace, full of pleasant fountains, full of beautiful things, full of the quality and promise of heart's desire. And there were many things and many people, some that still seem to stand out clearly and some that are vaguer; but all these people were beautiful and kind. In some way—I don't know how—it was conveyed to me that they all were kind to me, glad to have me there, and filling me with gladness by their gestures, by the touch of their hands, by the welcome and love in their eyes. Yes—'

He mused for a while. 'Playmates I found there. That was very much to me, because I was a lonely little boy. They played delightful games in a grass-covered court where there was a sun-dial set about with flowers. And as one played one loved...

'But—it's odd—there's a gap in my memory. I don't remember the games we played. I never remembered. Afterwards, as a child, I spent long hours trying, even with tears, to recall the form of that happiness. I wanted to play it all over again—in my nursery—by myself. No! All I remember is the happiness and two dear play fellows who were most with me ...Then presently came a sombre dark woman, with a grave, pale face and dreamy eyes, a sombre woman, wearing a soft long robe of pale purple, who carried a book, and beckoned and took me aside with her into a gallery above a hall—though my playmates were loth to have me go, and ceased their game and stood watching as I was carried away. "Come back to us!" they cried. "Come back to us soon!" I looked up at her face, but she heeded them not at all. Her face was very gentle and grave. She took me to a seat in the gallery, and I stood beside her, ready to look at her book as she opened it upon her knee. The pages fell open. She pointed, and I looked, marvelling, for in the living pages of that book I saw myself; it was a story about

myself, and in it were all the things that had happened to me since ever I was born...

'It was wonderful to me, because the pages of that book were not pictures, you understand, but realities.'

Wallace paused gravely—looked at me doubtfully.

'Go on,' I said. 'I understand.'

'They were realities—yes, they must have been; people moved and things came and went in them; my dear mother, whom I had never forgotten; then my father, stern and upright, the servants, the nursery, all the familiar things of home. Then the front door and the busy streets, with traffic to and fro. I looked and marvelled, and looked half doubtfully again into the woman's face and turned the pages over, skipping this and that, to see more of this book and more, and so at last I came to myself hovering and hesitating outside the green door in the long white wall, and felt again the conflict and the fear.

' "And next?" I cried, and would have turned on, but the cool hand of the grave woman delayed me.

' "Next?" I insisted, and struggled gently with her hand, pulling up her fingers with all my childish strength, and as she yielded and the page came over she bent down upon me like a shadow and kissed my brow.

'But the page did not show the enchanted garden, nor the panthers, nor the girls who had led me by the hand, nor the playfellows who had been so loth to let me go. It showed a long grey street in West Kensington, in that chill hour of afternoon before the lamps are lit; and I was there, a wretched little figure, weeping aloud, for all that I could do to restrain myself, and I was weeping because I could not return to my dear playfellows who had called after me, "Come back to us! Come back to us soon!" I was there. This was no page in a book, but harsh reality; that enchanted place and the restraining hand of the grave mother at whose knee I stood had gone—whither had they

gone?'

He halted again, and remained for a time staring into the fire 'Oh! the woefulness of that return!' he murmured.

'Well?' I said, after a minute or so.

'Poor little wretch I was!—brought back to this grey world again! As I realized the fullness of what had happened to me, I gave way to quite ungovernable grief. And the shame and humiliation of that public weeping and my disgraceful home-coming remain with me still. I see again the benevolent-looking old gentleman in gold spectacles who stopped and spoke to me—prodding me first with his umbrella. "Poor little chap," said he; "and are you lost then?"—and me a London boy of five and more! And he must needs bring in a kindly young policeman and make a crowd of me, and so march me home. Sobbing, conspicuous, and frightened, I came back from the enchanted garden to the steps of my father's house.

'That is as well as I can remember my vision of that garden—the garden that haunts me still. Of course, I can convey nothing of that indescribable quality of translucent unreality, that *difference* from the common things of experience that hung about it all; but that—that is what happened. If it was a dream, I am sure it was a day-time and altogether extraordinary dream... H'm!—naturally there followed a terrible questioning, by my aunt, my father, the nurse, the governess—every one...

'I tried to tell them, and my father gave me my first thrashing for telling lies. When afterwards I tried to tell my aunt, she punished me again for my wicked persistence. Then, as I said, every one was forbidden to listen to me, to hear a word about it. Even my fairy-tale books were taken away from me for a time—because I was too "imaginative". Eh? Yes, they did that! My father belonged to the old school... And my story was driven back upon myself. I whispered it to my pillow—my pillow that was often damp and salt to my whispering lips

with childish tears. And I added always to my official and less fervent prayers this one heart-felt request: "Please God I may dream of the garden. Oh! take back to my garden!" Take me back to my garden! I dreamt often of the garden. I may have added to it, I may have changed it; I do not know... All this, you understand, is an attempt to reconstruct from fragmentary memories a very early experience. Between that and the other consecutive memories of my boyhood there is a gulf. A time came when it seemed impossible I should ever speak of that wonder glimpse again.

I asked an obvious question.

'No,' he said. 'I don't remember that I ever attempted to find my way back to the garden in those early years. This seems odd to me, now, but I think that very probably a closer watch was kept on my movements after this misadventure to prevent my going astray. No, it wasn't till you knew me that I tried for the garden again. And I believe there was a period—incredible as it seems now—when I forgot the garden altogether—when I was about eight or nine it may have been. Do you remember me as a kid at Saint Althelstan's?'

'Rather!'

'I didn't show any signs, did I, in those days of having a secret dream?'

§ 2

He looked up with a sudden smile,

'Did you ever play North-West passage with me?... No, of course you didn't come my way!'

'It was the sort of game,' he went on, 'that every imaginative child plays all day. The idea was the discovery of a North-West Passage to school. The way to school was plain enough; the game consisted in finding some way that wasn't plain, starting off ten minutes early in some almost hopeless direction,

and working my way round through unaccustomed streets to my goal. And one day I got entangled among some rather low-class streets on the other side of Campden Hill, and I began to think that for once the game would be against me and that I should get to school late. I tried rather desperately a street that seemed a cul-de-sac, and found a passage at the end. I hurried through that with renewed hope. "I shall do it yet," I said, and passed a row of frowsy little shops that were inexplicably familiar to me, and behold! there was my long white wall and the green door that led to the enchanted garden!'

'The thing whacked upon me suddenly. Then, after all, that garden, that wonderful garden, wasn't a dream!'

He paused.

'I suppose my second experience with the green door marks the world of difference there is between the busy life of a schoolboy and the infinite leisure of a child. Anyhow, this second time I didn't for a moment think of going in straight away. You see—. For one thing, my mind was full of the idea of getting to school in time—set on not breaking my record for punctuality. I must surely have felt *some* little desire at least to try the door—yes. I must have felt that...But I seem to remember the attraction of the door mainly as another obstacle to my overmastering determination to get to school. I was immensely interested by this discovery I had made, of course—I went on with my mind full of it—but I went on. It didn't check me. I ran past, tugging out my watch, found I had ten minutes still to spare, and then I was going downhill into familiar surroundings. I got to school, breathless, it is true and wet with perspiration but in time. I can remember hanging up my coat and hat ... Went right by it and left it behind me. Odd, eh?'

He looked at me thoughtfully. 'Of course I didn't know then that it wouldn't always be there. Schoolboys have limited imaginations. I suppose I thought it was an awfully jolly thing

to have it there, to know my way back to it; but there was the school tugging at me. I expect I was a good deal distraught and inattentive that morning, recalling what I could of the beautiful strange people I should presently see again. Oddly enough I had no doubt in my mind that they would be glad to see me... Yes, I must have thought of the garden that morning just as a jolly sort of place to which one might resort in the interludes of a strenuous scholastic career.

'I didn't go that day at all. The next day was a half-holiday, and that may have weighed with me. Perhaps, too, my state of inattention brought down impositions upon me, and docked the margin of time necessary for the *detour*. I don't know. What I do know is that in the meantime the enchanted garden was so much upon my mind that I could not keep it to myself.'

'I told—what was his name?—a ferrety-looking youngster we used to call Squiff.'

'Young Hopkins,' said I.

'Hopkins it was. I did not like telling him. I had a feeling that in some way it was against the rules to tell him, but I did. He was walking part of the way home with me; he was talkative, and if we had not talked about the enchanted garden we should have talked of something else, and it was intolerable to me to think about any other subject. So I blabbed.

'Well, he told my secret. The next day in the play interval I found myself surrounded by half a dozen bigger boys, half teasing, and wholly curious to hear more of the enchanted garden. There was that big Fawcett—you remember him?—and Carnaby and Morley Reynolds. You weren't there by any chance? No, I think I should have remembered if you were...

'A boy is a creature of odd feelings. I was, I really believe, in spite of my secret self-disgust, a little flattered to have the attention of these big fellows. I remember particularly a moment of pleasure caused by the praise of Crawshaw—you remember

Crawshaw major, the son of Crawshaw the composer?—who said it was the best lie he had ever heard. But at the same time there was a really painful undertow of shame at telling what I felt was indeed a sacred secret. That beast Fawcett made a joke about the girl in green—'

Wallace's voice sank with the keen memory of that shame. 'I pretended not to hear,' he said. 'Well, then Carnaby suddenly called me a young liar, and disputed with me when I said the thing was true. I said I knew where to find the green door, could lead them all there in ten minutes. Carnaby became outrageously virtuous, and said I'd have to—and bear out my words or suffer. Did you ever have Carnaby twist your arm? Then perhaps you'll understand how it went with me. I swore my story was true. There was nobody in the school then to save a chap from Carnaby, though Crawshaw put in a word or so. Carnaby had got his game. I grew excited and red-eared, and a little frightened. I behaved altogether like a silly little chap, and the outcome of it all was that instead of starting alone for my enchanted garden, I led the way presently—cheeks flushed, ears hot, eyes smarting, and my soul one burning misery and shame—for a party of six mocking, curious, and threatening schoolfellows.

'We never found the white wall and the green door...'

'You mean—?'

'I mean I couldn't find it. I would have found it if I could.

'And afterwards when I could go alone I couldn't find it. I never found it. I seem now to have been always looking for it through my schoolboy days, but I never came upon it—never.'

'Did the fellows—make it disagreeable?'

'Beastly... Carnaby held a council over me for wanton lying. I remember how I sneaked home and upstairs to hide the marks of my blubbering. But when I cried myself to sleep at last it wasn't for Carnaby, but for the garden, for the beautiful

afternoon I had hoped for, for the sweet friendly women and the waiting play-fellows, and the game I had hoped to learn again, that beautiful forgotten game...

'I believed firmly that if I had not told...I had bad times after that—crying at night and wool-gathering by day. For two terms I slacked and had bad reports. Do you remember? Of course you would! It was *you*—your beating me in mathematics that brought me back to the grind again.'

§ 3

For a time my friend stared silently into the red heart of the fire. Then he said: 'I never saw it again until I was seventeen.

'It leaped upon me for the third time—as I was driving to Paddington on my way to Oxford and a scholarship. I had just one momentary glimpse. I was leaning over the apron of my hansom smoking a cigarette, and no doubt thinking myself no end of a man of the world, and suddenly there was the door, the wall, the dear sense of unforgettable and still attainable things.

'We clattered by—I too taken by surprise to stop my cab until we were well past and round a corner. Then I had a queer moment, a double and divergent movement of my will: I tapped the little door in the roof of the cab, and brought my arm down to pull out my watch. "Yes, sir!" said the cabman, smartly. "Er—well—it's nothing," I cried. "*My* mistake! We haven't much time! Go on!" And he went on...

'I got my scholarship. And the night after I was told of that I sat over my fire in my little upper room, my study, in my father's house, with his praise—his rare praise—and his sound counsels ringing in my ears, and I smoked my favourite pipe—the formidable bulldog of adolescence—and thought of that door in the long white wall. "If I had stopped," I thought, "I should have missed my scholarship, I should have missed Ox-

ford—muddled all the fine career before me! I begin to see things better!" I feel musing deeply, but I did not doubt then this career of mine was a thing that merited sacrifice.

'Those dear friends and that clear atmosphere seemed very sweet to me, very fine but remote. My grip was fixing now upon the world. I saw another door opening—the door of my career.'

He stared again into the fire. Its red light picked out a stubborn strength in his face for just one flickering moment, and then it vanished again.

'Well,' he said and sighed, 'I have served that career. I have done—much work, much hard work. But I have dreamt of the enchanted garden a thousand dreams, and seen its door, or at least glimpsed its door, four times since then. Yes—four times. For a while this world was so bright and interesting, seemed so full of meaning and opportunity, that the half-effaced charm of the garden was by comparison gentle and remote. Who wants to pat panthers on the way to dinner with pretty women and distinguished men? I came down to London from Oxford, a man of bold promise that I have done something to redeem. Something—and yet there have been disappointments...

'Twice I have been in love—I will not dwell on that—but once, as I went to some one who, I knew, doubted whether I dared to come, I took a short cut at a venture through an unfrequented road near Earl's Court, and so happened on a white wall and a familiar green door. "Odd!" said I to myself, "but I thought this place was on Campden Hill. It's the place I never could find somehow—like counting Stonehenge—the place of that queer daydream of mine." And I went by it intent upon my purpose. It had no appeal to me that afternoon.

'I had just a moment's impulse to try the door, three steps aside were needed at the most—though I was sure enough in my heart that it would open to me—and then I thought that doing so might delay me on the way to that appointment in

which my honour was involved. Afterwards I was sorry for my punctuality—I might at least have peeped in and waved a hand to those pathers, but I knew enough by this time not to seek again belatedly that which is not found by seeking. Yes, that time made me very sorry...

'Years of hard work after that, and never a sight of the door. It's only recently it has come back to me. With it there has come a sense as though some thin tarnish had spread itself over my world. I began to think of it as a sorrowful and bitter thing that I should never see that door again. Perhaps I was suffering a little from overwork—perhaps it was what I've heard spoken of as the feeling of forty. I don't know. But certainly the keen brightness that makes effort easy has gone out of things recently, and that just at a time—with all these new political developments—when I ought to be working. Odd, isn't it? But I do begin to find life toilsome, its rewards, as I come near them, cheap. I began a little while ago to want the garden quite badly. Yes—and I've seen it three times.'

'The garden?'

'No—the door! And I haven't gone in!'

He leaned over the table to me, with an enormous sorrow in his voice as he spoke. 'Thrice I have had my chance—*thrice*! If ever that door offers itself to me again, I swore, I will go in, out of this dust and heat, out of this dry glitter of vanity, out of these toilsome futilities. I will go and never return. This time I will stay...I swore it, and when the time came—*I didn't go.*

'Three times in one year have I passed that door and failed to enter. Three times in the last year.

'The first time was on the night of the snatch division on the Tenants' Redemption Bill, on which the Government was saved by a majority of three. You remember? No one on our side—perhaps very few on the opposite side—expected the end

that night. Then the debate collapsed like eggshells. I and Hotchkiss were dining with his cousin at Brentford; we were both unpaired, and we were called up by telephone, and set off at once in his cousin's motor. We got in barely in time, and on the way we passed my wall and door—livid in the moonlight, blotched with hot yellow as the glare of our lamps lit it, but unmistakable. "My God!" cried I. "What?" said Hotchkiss. "Nothing!" I answered, and the moment passed.

' "I've made a great sacrifice," I told the whip as I got in. "They all have," he said, and hurried by.

'I do not see how I could have done otherwise then. And the next occasion was as I rushed to my father's beside to bid that stern old man farewell. Then, too, the claims of life were imperative. But the third time was different; it happened a week ago. It fills me with hot remorse to recall it. I was with Gurker and Ralphs—it's no secret now, you know, that I've had my talk with Gurker. We had been dining at Frobisher's, and the talk had become intimate between us. The question of my place in the reconstructed Ministry lay always just over the boundary of the discussion. Yes—yes. That's all settled. It needn't be talked about yet, but there's no reason to keep a secret from you...Yes—thanks! thanks! But let me tell you my story.

'Then, on that night things were very much in the air. My position was a very delicate one. I was keenly anxious to get some definite word from Gurker, but was hampered by Ralphs' presence. I was using the best power of my brain to keep that light and careless talk not too obviously directed to the point that concerned me. I had to. Ralphs' behaviour since has more than justified my caution...Ralphs, I knew, would leave us beyond the Kensington High Street, and then I could surprise Gurker by a sudden frankness. One has sometime to resort to these little devices...And then it was that in the margin of my field of vision I became aware once more of the white wall, the

green door before us down the road.

'We passed it talking. I passed it. I can still see the shadow of Gurker's marked profile, his opera hat tilted forward over his prominent nose, the many folds of his neck wrap going before my shadow and Ralph's as we sauntered past.

'I passed within twenty inches of the door. "If I say good-night to them, and go in," I asked myself, "what will happen?" And I was all a-tingle for that word with Gurker.

'I could not answer that question in the tangle of my other problems. "They will think me mad," I thought. "And suppose I vanish now!—Amazing disappearance of a prominent politician!" That weighed with me. A thousand inconceivably petty worldlinesses weighed with me in that crisis.'

Then he turned on me with a sorrowful smile, and, speaking slowly, 'Here I am!' he said.

'Here I am!' he repeated, 'and my chance has gone from me. Three times in one year the door has been offered me—the door that goes into peace, into delight, into a beauty beyond dreaming, a kindness no man on earth can know. And I have rejected it, Redmond, and it has gone—'

'How do you know?'

'I know. I know. I am left now to work it out, to stick to the tasks that held me so strongly when my moments came. You say I have success—this vulgar, tawdry, irksome, envied thing. I have it.' He had a walnut in his big hand. 'If that was my success,' he said, and crushed it, and held it out for me to see.

'Let me tell you something, Redmond. This loss is destroying me. For two months, for ten weeks nearly now, I have done no work at all, except the most necessary and urgent duties. My soul is full of inappeasable regrets. At nights—when it is less likely I shall be recognized—I go out. I wander. Yes. I wonder what people would think of that if they knew. A Cabinet Minister, the responsible head of that most vital of all depart-

ments, wandering alone—grieving—sometimes near audibly lamenting—for a door, for a garden!'

§4

I can see now his rather pallid face, and the unfamiliar sombre fire that had some into his eyes. I see him very vividly to-night. I sit recalling his words, his tones, and last evening's *Westminister Gazette* still lies on my sofa, containing the notice of his death. At lunch to-day the club was busy with his death. We talked of nothing else.

They found his body very early yesterday morning in a deep excavation near East Kensington Station. It is one of two shafts that have been made in connexion with an extension of the railway southward. It is protected from the intrusion of the public by a hoarding upon the high road, in which a small doorway has been cut for the convenience of some of the workmen who live in that direction. The doorway was left unfastened through a misunderstanding between two gangers, and through it he made his way.

My mind is darkened with questions and riddles.

It would seem he walked all the way from the House that night—he has frequently walked home during the past Session—and so it is I figure his dark form coming along the late and empty streets, wrapped up, intent. And then did the pale electric lights near the station cheat the rough planking into a semblance of white? Did that fatal unfastened door awaken some memory? Was there, after all, ever any green door in the wall at all?

I do not know. I have told his story as he told it to me. There are times when I believe that Wallace was no more than the victim of the coincidence between a rare but not unprecedented type of hallucination and a careless trap, but that indeed is not my profoundest belief. You may think me superstitious, if you will, and foolish; but, indeed, I am more than half convinced that he

had, in truth, an abnormal gift, and a sense, something—I know not what—that in the guise of wall and door offered him an outlet, a secret and peculiar passage of escape into another and altogether more beautiful world. At any rate, you will say, it betrayed him in the end. But did it betray him? There you touch the inmost mystery of these dreamers, these men of vision and the imagination. We see our world fair and common, the hoarding and the pit. By our daylight standard he walked out of security into darkness, danger, and death.

But did he see like that?

NOTES

Glamour: strange, strong attraction.

Denude: make bare or naked; strip.

Flavour: quality of taste, or smell.

Reticent: reserved, saying little.

Haunted: visited by ghosts; *here*, obsessed (by the image of the door in the wall).

Detachment: aloofness, standing aloof from or unaffected by surroundings.

Precocious: coming to development earlier than is normal.

Inflection: movement up or down of voice.

Capuchin: South American monkey with a whitish face and a hoodlike crown of black hair.

Paraquet: small kind of parrot.

North-West Passage: It was believed in the 16th century that a passage to China existed north of Canada. English sailors tried to reach China by means of this passage.

Cul de sac: (*French for*) blind alley.

Interlude: time between events, especially acts of a play.

Detour: going by a roundabout way.

A current of water moving beneath and in a different

direction from that of the surface water.

Blab: let out secret in talk.

Composer: one who composes music.

Wanton: motiveless, serving no purpose, useless.

Sneak: go secretly.

Wool-gathering: absent mindedness or day-dreaming.

Blubber: weep loudly.

Muddle: do something badly, put out of order.

Stonehenge: primitive stone structure on Salisbury plain, England, set up over a thousand years ago.

Whip: officer of a political party in parliament who maintains discipline and enforces attendance.

Tawdry: brightly ornamented, but cheap and common.

Shaft: vertical or inclined excavation giving access to a mine.

Ganger: foreman of a gang.

Hoarding: fence of boards round building during erection or repairs.

THE LITTLE WILLOW

FRANCES TOWERS

THE first evening, Simon Byrne was brought to the house by a friend of Charlotte's, one of those with whom she would have to settle an account after the war—unless, of course, he didn't come back. The stranger stood on the threshold and took in the room, and a look of such extraordinary delight came over his face that the youngest Miss Avery's heart gave a little leap, almost as if, independently of her mind and will, it greeted of its own accord another of its kind.

It was, of course, a peculiarly gracious room, with its high ceiling and Adam chimney-piece. The shiny white walls were painted with light and dim reflections of colours, and a thick black hearthrug smudged with curly pink roses—an incongruous Balkan peasant rug in that chaste room—somehow struck a note of innocence and gaiety, like the scherzo in a symphony. That rug, and the photographs on the lid of the grand piano; the untidy stack of books on a table; and a smoky pseudo old master over the fireplace, with the lily of the Annunciation as a highlight, a pale question mark in the gloom, gave the room an oddly dramatic quality. Lisby had often thought—'It is like a room on the stage, in which the story of three sisters is about to unfold.'

The passing reflections of Charlotte in red, Brenda in green made a faint shimmer on the walls as they drifted about, as if a herbaceous border were reflected momentarily in water.

'Charlotte dear, I've brought a friend. He was at Tobruk. Comes from South Africa, and doesn't know a soul over here,' said Stephen Elyot. 'He's just out of hospital.'

'I am so glad!' said Charlotte glowingly, giving him both her hands. 'You must come as often as you like.'

His eyes dwelt on her dark, lovely face, and he said, 'You don't know what it feels like to be in a drawing room again.'

'I can very well imagine. It must feel like the peace of God,' said Brenda, in that soft, plangent voice of hers, which was so perfect an instrument for the inspired remarks that seemed to fall effortlessly from her lips.

She could say the most divinely right things without a throb of real sympathy, and would spend pounds on roses rather than write a letter of condolence. As for her 'cello playing, it was strange how deeply she could move one, while she herself remained quite aloof. It was because she knew what the music was meant to say and was thinking about the music all the time, and not of how she played or how she felt. It was a great charm in her.

Lisby said nothing. She had no poetic conception of herself to impose on the minds of others. However, she had her uses. She cut the sandwiches and made the coffee and threw herself into the breach when some unassuming guest seemed in danger of being neglected. And unassuming guests often were. Charlotte and Brenda had such brilliant friends—musicians and artists and writers. The truest thing about those girls was that they were charmers. Every other fact sank into insignificance beisde that one supreme quality. Though each had her own strongly marked individuality, they had this in common: that by lamplight they acquired, in their trailing dresses, a timeless look, as if they might have stood for types of the seductive woman in any age. Not a modern girl; but the delicate creature who through the ages has been man's rose of beauty, or his cup of hemlock.

Always, destroying friendship, there was this allure—the glow, the franganee, the what-you-will, which, sooner or later,

ensnared every young man and made him the captive of one or other of the two elder Misses Avery.

'Charlotte dear,' said Stephen Elyot, wandering about the room with his coffee-cup in his hand, 'I wonder, with your exquisite taste, you let that picture hang there! It's all *wrong*, my dear, as I've told you before. A Watteau, now, or a Fragonard, for this eighteenth-century room. And yet your *decors* for the stage are so perfect! You are *quite* my favourite designer.'

'Lisby would die if we banished the picture. It's been in the family for generations,' said Charlotte.

'It has been loved by people who are dead, for its...holiness, not for aesthetic reasons; and that makes it spiritually precious,' said Simon Byrne in a low voice to Lisby, by whom he chanced to be sitting.

She gave a little start. The thick white paint of the lily, and its golden tongue, had fascinated her as a child, making all lilies seem not quite earthly flowers. How did he know so quickly that the dark picture in the white room brought spiritual values into it, brought her mother saying, 'Yes, darling; perhaps the angel has a queer face—perhaps he *is* a little bit like Miss Nettleton. How interesting that someone we know should have a face that an old master chose for the Angel Gabriel! I shall always think of Miss Nettleton as a very special kind of person.'

'It almost seems as if he might be my kind of person,' she thought. Perhaps one would have thought his face unremarkable if one had not caught that look on it. 'He has known horror and violence, and is terribly vulnerable to beauty,' she had said to herself, with one of her flashes of insight.

Brenda played that evening, and Simon Byrne never took his eyes off her. In her long green dress, with her gold hair like an inverted sheaf of corn, she held him spellbound. Or perhaps it was the music.

When she went to bed that night, Lisby caught herself hoping quite desperately that it was, after all, the music; and for such a foolish reason. Because as he was leaving he took her little willow tree in his long thin hands.

'So cool,' he said, 'and watery. Willows and water—I used to dream of them.'

'In the desert?' she asked.

'When I was lost,' he said, 'and parched with thirst, and terribly frightened.'

'It's the loveliest thing I have,' she said.

It was made of jade and crystal and it stood on the lacquer cabinet in the hall. She had fallen in love with it in an antique shop and had expended on it, with wild extravagance, her first term's salary as a teacher. Charlotte and Brenda had thought her too utterly feckless—almost wicked. The sun by day and the moon by night made it throw a lovely shadow on the wall. She couldn't explain that what she loved was the *idea* of a willow that had been in the mind of the Chinese artist—the glitter and coolness and bewitchment. But he would know.

He came several times. 'Naturally,' thought Lisby, 'one would like the house, wouldn't one? Its oldness and peace.' And Charlotte arranged the flowers so beautifully and there were music and conversation: Brenda and her friends practising their quartets for concerts and Charlotte's friends talking of art. Anyone could come to the Court House as a place in which to forget the war. There was the strangeness of its being so near London and yet completely hidden in a wood, an oasis in the desert of ribbon development that had spread around it in the past few years. Many young men on leave found it a place of refuge.

He was a person one could talk to. The things that made Lisby laugh made him laugh too. Sometimes he would catch her eye and they would go off into a silent fit of laughter at

some absurd thing that no one else had remarked. She knew, once or twice, the strange feeling of strings being plucked in her mind by a chance word or gesture of his, and he had a way of humming some tune that had been haunting her, even something she had not heard for a long time: a phrase from a symphony, perhaps, that had suddenly come back to her quite distinctly between sleeping and waking, as if a record had been put on in her mind.

And then, one day, Brenda, in her delicate way, appropriated his friendship. A person versed in Brenda-ish modes of behaviour could guess what she thought. When she said charming things a little frostily, as if offering an ice-chilled gardenia, when she smiled dazzling sweetness, one moment and raised her eyebrows rather clodly the next, one knew what was in her mind. She was dealing with a situation that required delicacy and tact. Love was sacred, even unwanted love. The little flame must not be allowed to go out. So one blew on it prettily one moment, and damped it down the next. For a conflagration meant the end of everything, it meant stamping on the heart in which it burned. And how, in wartime, could one bear to do that?

She said, 'You know, Simon is rather an intriguing person. He can say rather divine things—when one is alone with him. Still waters, my dear, run deep.'

Yes. He wouldn't wear his heart on his sleeve. But to be the person to whom he said 'rather divine things' must be to feel oneself unimaginably exquisite.

There was that night they all went out into the garden when the all clear sounded. The scent of the tobacco plants was so sweet it was like a presence, like a naked nymph following one about, and the moon was so bright that the red roses kept their colour, and the white were luminous like the moths. Standing apart,

Very sig.

Lisby was fascinated by his shadow lying clear-cut on the lawn. She started at it, and then, looking up, saw it printed, gigantic, across the sky. It gave her a queer cold feeling, seeming to confirm an idea she had had of him lately: that everything he was concerned in here and now was the beginning of something that would go on happening outside this sphere. It would always be there, behind her eyelids.

After that, she couldn't go on trying to make up to him for the times that Brenda was too much occupied with someone else to bother about him. It would be a kind of mockery. The only thing was to keep out of his way.

But the last evening of his embarkation leave, when he came to say good-bye, it was she who had to see him to the front door. Brenda was fey that night, with a kind of febrile gaiety, because the favoured lover of the moment was home on forty-eight hours' leave, and she had no eyes for anyone but him; and Charlottee was deeply involved with Richard Harkness. When they said good-bye, they would doubtless be driven into each other's arms. One could see it in their eyes when they looked at each other.

Lisby's eyes fell on the little willow. She seized it and put it into his outstretched hand. 'Please take it—for luck,' she said.

'But you can't give this away, Miss Avery. It's—it's...much too lovely,' he stammered.

'Please, please—it's more yours than mine.'

'It's terribly kind of you. Your sisters—you've been so kind letting me come. I shall dream of this house.'

'But you'll come again,' said Lisby, speaking as lightly as she could.

'I'd try to...in the spirit, if not in the flesh,' he said, with his crooked smile. Why must he say a thing so devastating?

'Look at Orion—like some secret heavenly diagram,' said Lisby, at the open door, because she had no word of comfort

Orion is thus a symbol of love and faithfulness.

for him (Oh, dear! He'll think I'm trying to be appealing, trying to be a poetical little puss, trying to get at him, she thought despairingly.) If only Brenda would come out for a moment and be very sweet in that way she had of being responsive to another's mood! She could have given him something to take away with him, some cryptic remark, that he could dwell upon and cherish, as if it were a tiny key she had put into his hand to unlock a door in the future. But she was caught away into a private heaven, and so he had to go without any hope.

He looked up at the heart breaking glitter of Orion, so serene, so triumphant above the tortured world. 'A lover might use it as a code,' he said, almost under his breath. 'Abelard signing his letters to Heloise.'

He looked down at her, hesitating a moment, as if there were something he wanted to say. And then, with a sigh, he turned away. As he looked back at the gate to salute her, the little tree in his hand caught the starlight and shone with a faint blue fire.

He never wrote. Lisby, sorting out the post, sometimes looked wonderingly at a letter addressed to Brenda in a hand-writing she didn't know, but the name on the flap of the envelope was never his.

When the war was over at last, Richard Harkness, liberated from a prison camp in Germany, came back to claim Charlotte. Their wedding was fixed for the autumn.

'By the way, Brenda,' Charlotte said casually one day, looking up from a letter she was writing. 'I forgot to tell you. Richard says that Simon Byrne was a prisoner in the same Offlag. He died last year.'

'Oh, poor darling!' said Brenda, in the sweet, hollow voice she used when the conventions demanded an assumption of sorrow. One's heart had been wrung so often that there had come a time when it recorded merely a mechanical spasm. She

went on arranging the flowers with a set expression.

Lisby said nothing. She sat very still in the recesses of the armchair and clasped her knees to still their trembling. 'So much death, one cannot bear it,' she said at last, and got herself out of the room somehow. She always took things to heart—as if she suffered in her own body the agony of unknown millions.

'It's all very well for Lisby,' said Brenda with a shrug. 'But, after all, she hasn't had any *personal* loss in this war. Not like you and me. I mean, when someone's killed who's been in love with one, it makes it all so terribly piognant. I sometimes think I've felt so much, I can't feel any more. Those poor lamps!' She sighed and dipped her face into the roses, as if she would leave with them the expression of grief she could now decently abandon. It was almost as though as she were leaving them on his grave to symbolize her thoughts of him, that would fade more quickly than they. 'He was sweet, but rather dumb,' she said.

'Did he ever—' asked Charlotte, looking over her tortoise-shell glasses.

'Not in so many words. You all took it for granted it was me. But perhaps, after all, *you* were the attraction, Charlotte.' But the hint of doubt found no expression in the tones of her voice.

'Or Lisby. It really is rather awful the way we leave her out of account.'

Charlotte sealed her letter and took off her glasses. She had a face like La Belle Ferroniere, on which the glasses had the air of an amusing affectation. But Brenda had the flowerlike delicacy of a Piero della Francesca. Lisby had seen the resemblances and had made her sisters a present of them. But no one had noticed that she herself was like a watching girl who holds a basket on her head in the back-ground of El Greco's *Christ in the Temple*.

'Of course,' said Charlotte, affixing a stamp, 'it wasn't I. That's a thing I never make a mistake about. A woman always knows.'

'Well, I am not so cocksure about love as you seem to be. I mean, I'm inclined to say to myself, "*If* he does so and so, *if* he remembers what hat I wore the day before yesterday, *If* he bothers to look up the address I'm staying at in the telephone book, *then* I shall know for certain," But I don't remember applying any such tests to Simon. Somehow we never got that far. Though I had my suspicions, of course.'

Brenda carried the roses across the room and put them on the piano, in the midst of the numerous photographs, of young men in uniform. Surreptitiously she changed the place of one. He had been shot down over Hamburg, and his place was among the dead. Perhaps no one but herself, who was responsible for it, was aware of this arrangement of the photographs. She had a feeling about the matter of which she would not have spoken for the world. It did not exactly amount to a superstition. Perhaps it meant no more than did the meticulous dividing up of her books into their respective categories. It irritated her to find a novel thrust in between two volumes of poetry. Death, perhaps, was poetry, and life, prose. Or was it the other way round?

In the midst of preparations for the wedding, no one, it seemed, gave another thought to Simon Byrne.

'Lisby seems rather odd these days—sort of strung-up,' said Charlotte one day. 'Do you think, Brenda, that sub-consciously she minds my getting married and your being engaged? I mean, it can't be much fun, poor child, seeing happiness through other people's eyes, as Shakespeare has already remarked.' She snapped off a thread and took the pins out of a seam.

Brenda looked down with a preoccupied expression at the ring

on her long pale hand, where it lay on a fold of crepe de Chine she had been sewing. 'How incredibly lucky we are that our two have come through alive!' she said. 'Gerald doesn't know *how* lucky he is; because it *might* have been John. I don't know, but I *think* it might have been. I was devastated when he was killed. I dare say you are right about Lisby. But what can we do...?'

'That cyclamen colour you've chosen for the bridesmaids—of course, you'll look divine in it, but it's trying for Lisby. Heaven knows, she's sallow enough.'

'But, my dear, what was I to do? We had the stuff and we've got no coupons. If only Gerald were back, we could have had a double wedding and both got out of Lisby's way. I feel we rather swamp her, you know—like two arc lamps putting out the moon-light. Now, isn't that a tribute to our Lis?'

Charlotte was married on a golden day. While they waited for her in the porch, Lisby thought that Brenda looked more like an Italian primitive than ever, pale and bright as an angel. (But we are all wrong for the blue horizon and the golden leaves—too shrill, too springlike, she thought.) Their reflections stained with pink the dewdrops in a spider's web slung between two tombstones.

A cab drove up to the lich-gate, and Charlotte came down the path on the arm of an uncle, her dark eyes shining through her veil. She was so majestic, so withdrawn that they did not venture to speak to her, but spread out her train, whispering nervously together.

Richard Harkness stood at the altar steps. To Lisby he had rather a vulpine look. It argued a certain spirituality in Charlotte, not to be deceived by outward appearances, but to swoop unerringly on the qualities she wanted. But he hadn't been Simon's sort. He had never mentioned Simon's name in Lisby's

presence. She was grateful to him for that, but she couldn't forgive him.

She stole a glance apprehensively at the best man. He had been in the camp too—a doctor, they said. He had a dark, ascetic face, sensitive and melancholy. One must keep out of his way.

The wedding reception was like any other: the strained hilarity, the desperate frivolity, lit with a perilous brightness as of unshed tears. Corks popped, the cake was cut, the toasts proposed. Charlotte came out of her trance, and Richard made a speech so charming that all her friends began to think they knew, after all, what she saw in him.

There was Brenda by the window, trying desperately to make conversation with Captain Oliver. When her voice was high and strained like that, one knew she was wilting; and there were those faint mauve shadows under her eyes. The man was difficult. He appeared to have no capacity for small talk.

'By the way, did you come across someone who was a friend of mine—Simon Byrne? He was in the tanks,' she said.

Brenda...don't...Don't! Lisby cried out soundlessly, with a pain like cramp about her heart. His name seemed to sound through the room like a clash of cymbals. She felt that it must pierce every breastbone. It made a stranger of Brenda. It was incomprehensible that she could use it to make conversation, that to her it could be a name like any other.

Lisby saw the start that Captain Oliver gave. He turned quickly and looked a Brenda—a long, searching look.

'Yes, I knew Byrne,' he said.

'He was such a dear. We liked him so much. Look, Charlotte has gone up to change. I must fly after her.'

They were gone at last. Charlotte leaned out and waved. Someone threw a slipper after the taxicab.

In the throng at the gate, Lisby was aware of Captain Oliver

edging his way toward her.

'Miss Avery,' he said in her ear, 'may I speak to you a moment alone?'

'In the morning room,' said Lisby, very pale. For some unfathomable reason she picked up her bouquet from the hall table before preceding him into the little yellow room.

A picture glowing with evening appeared in the frame of the window. In the foreground, the black trunk of the mulberry tree, about which still dangled a few heart-shaped leaves of sour green, and to the right the long plumes of the pampas grass, had a strange significance, as if the words 'black, gold, silver' were being reiterated in a poem. The blue October mist lay beyond, veiling the lawn, and a little sumac tree burned like a torch at the edge of the mist. A bird that had abandoned music for the winter made a grasshopper sound.

The pampas grass. Charlotte had tried to dig it up—a vulgar interloper, she had said. Lisby clung desperately to her thoughts. She did not want to hear what this man had to say. She sank down on the sofa and began mechanically to take her bouquet to pieces. The colour was drained out of her face, and she looked ghastly in the cyclaman shade that was so becoming to Brenda.

'So you knew Simon Byrne,' said Captain Oliver, looking down at her. 'I wonder... Perhaps you could help me, Miss Avery? I was with him when he died.'

'Have you, perhaps, a message... for my sister?' asked Lisby faintly, arranging little sprigs of heather on her knee.

'That's what I don't know,' he said with a sigh. 'There is something I'd like to tell someone—but not the wrong person. You see, Simon meant a great deal to me. Could you tell me, did she ever give him a little tree, a willow? I suppose it was one of those Chinese things.'

'No,' said Lisby, very low, 'she never gave him anything.'

'I am going to tell *you*,' said Captain Oliver, as if making a

sudden decision. 'A secret would be safe with you, wouldn't it? He was badly hurt, you know. His wound never healed. He was terribly ill all the time; but the odd thing was that through it all, he was never less than himself. They couldn't do anything to Simon. They couldn't strip him of a single one of his qualities. It was as if he had some inward source of happiness, a core of peace in his heart. The camp was short of doctors and they were only too pleased to make use of me, so I was able to make things a little easier for him.'

'I am glad,' she said, bent over her flowers, 'that he had you to look after him.'

'The night before he died,' went on Captain Oliver, in a low deliberate voice, 'he dictated a letter to his mother in South Africa. He was a bit of a poet, you know. It was a very touching letter. I suppose she has it now, poor soul. I said, "Is there no one else, Simon?" He shook his head. "There was a girl," he said, "but she never knew she was my girl." I asked him to tell me about her, thinking it might comfort him. He said, "She is a little, quiet creature—like mignonette—and her eyes go light and dark with her thoughts. I knew in my bones she was meant for me. Once, when the pain was very bad, I thought she came and kissed me. I felt her cheek against mine. It was soft and cool—like young buds, as I always imagined it would be. And the paint went away and I went to sleep. You know, Robert, she wouldn't mind my dreaming that. She has such exquisite compassion. When I said good-bye, she gave me the loveliest thing she had—a little willow tree. It was smashed to bits in my kit when the shell got us." I thought to myself, "Perhaps she did care, that girl." He died toward morning, very peacefully, without speaking again.'

Lisby sat very still. 'So cold...so cold,' she said, chafing her hands as if the hand of the dying lay between them.

'So *you* were his girl,' said Robert Oliver.

'He was my dear, dear love,' whispered Lisby. She bowed her head on her knees and wept soundlessly.

He thought, 'It is sad for a girl when her first avowal of love has to be made to a third person.' And, going softly to the door, he turned the key in the lock and let himself out by the window.

'Lisby cried her eyes out after you left,' wrote Brenda to Charlotte. 'But at night she looked so radiant, one might have thought it was *her* wedding day. There were dozens of letters for you by the evening post (I've sent them on) and some for me. I sorted them out, and said, as one usually does, "None for you, I'm afraid, Lisby darling." She looked at me so strangely, and said, "I have had mine—one that was never written." What could she have meant? I said, "What on earth do you mean?" But I knew from the look on her face that it is one of those things she will never tell.'

NOTES

Smudge: dirty mark.
Incongruous: not in harmony with; in the wrong place.
Scherzo: light and playful composition following a slow one in a musical composition.
Symphony: long musical composition for orchestra.
Old master: great artist, especially painters of 13th—17th centuries. Also picture by an old master.
Pseudo: deceptively similar to.
Annunciation: Gabriel's statement to Mary that she was to become the mother of Christ.
Herbaceous: in gardens, a border devoted to perennial flowering plants.
Plangent: sad, moving.
'Cello: violincello, a musical instrument.
Watteau, Jean Antoine, 1684—1721: French painter.

Fragonard, 1732—1806: French painter.

Decor: the decorative scheme of a room or stage.

Vulnerable: able to be wounded; offering an opening for attack.

Antique shop: shop where very old furniture, silverware, etc. are sold.

Feckless: of no use; feeble.

Intriguing person: interesting person.

Quartet: music for four players.

Fey: disordered in mind.

Febrile: feverish.

Orion: constellation of stars resembling a hunter with belt and sword.

Cryptic: secret; not made clear. A crypt is an underground cell or vault beneath a church, used as burial-place.

Abelard, 1079—1142: mediaeval Christian theologian and thinker. While he was at the height of his popularity, he fell violently in love with Heloise, niece of the canon of Paris. The latter hired ruffians who broke into Abelard's chamber and subjected him to brutal mutilation. Abelard, filled with grief and shame, became a monk and Heloise took the veil. Heloise was one of the most learned women of the middle ages.

Code: system of signs for secret writing or talking.

Offlag: German prison camp for officers.

Piero della Francesca, 1420?—1492: Umbrian painter.

El Greco, 1548?—1614: sculptor and painter in Italy and Spain.

Cocksure: perfectly sure.

Meticulous: giving great attention to details.

Crepe de chine: soft, thin material used for women's blouses.

Sallow: unhealthy yellow colour.

Vulpine: like a fox.

Ascetic: austere.

Italian primitive: primitive here means an artist or a work of art that belongs to an early period.
Swamp: prevent from being noticed or taking effect.
Wilt: wither, drop.
Difficult person: person hard to satisfy or persuade.
Small talk: light talk about common, everyday things.
Interloper: one pushing himself in where he has no right.
Ghastly: death-like, white.
Mignonette: plant with sweet smelling, green, brown flowers.
Know in my bones: feel certain without a real reason.

PRELUDE IN DHAUFAR

WILFRED THESIGER

The Wali of Dhaufar collects a party of Bait Kathir at Salala to escort me to the sands of Ghanim. While waiting for their arrival I travel in the Qarra mountains.

THE DESERTS of Arabia cover more than a million square miles, and the southern desert occupies nearly half of the total area. The southern desert stretches for nine hundred miles from the frontier of the Yemen to the foothills of Oman, and for five hundred miles from the southern coast of Arabia to the Persian Gulf and the borders of the Najd. The greater part of it is a wilderness of sand; it is desert within a desert, so enormous and so desolate that even Arabs call it the Rub al Khali or the Empty Quarter.

In 1929 T.E. Lawrence wrote to Lord Trenchard, Marshal of the Royal Air Force, suggesting that either the R100 or R101 should be deviated on its trial flight to India to pass over the Empty Quarter. He wrote, 'to go over the empty quarter will be an enormous advertisement for them. It will mark an era of exploration. Nothing but an airship can do it, and I want it to be one of ours which gets the plum.' Nevertheless in 1930 Bertram Thomas crossed this desert from south to north, and a few months later another Englishman, St John Philby, crossed it again, this time from the north. Thomas and Philby had proved that the Empty Quarter could be crossed with camels, but when I went there fifteen years later they were the only Europeans who had travelled in it, and vast areas between the Yemen and Oman were still unexplored.

When I was at Oxford I had read *Arabia Felix*, in which Bertram Thomas described his journey. The month which I had already spent in the Danakil country had given me some appreciation and understanding of desert life, and Lawrence's *Revolt in the Desert* had awakened my interest in the Arabs; but while at Oxford I longed only to return to Abyssinia. It was not until later that my thoughts turned more and more frequently to the Empty Quarter. Although I had travelled in the deserts of the Sudan and the Sahara, others had been before me and the mystery was gone: the routes and wells, the dunes and mountains were marked on maps; the tribes were administered. The thrill that I had known when travelling in the Danakil country was missing. The Empty Quarter became for me the Promised Land, but the approaches to it were barred until this chance meeting with Lean gave me my great opportunity. I was not really interested in locusts. I certainly would not have volunteered to go to Kenya or the Kalahari to look for them but they provided me with the golden key to Arabia.

Nowadays one of the chief obstacles to travel in the few unexplored places of the world that remain is getting permission from the governments which claim them. It would have been difficult, perhaps even impossible, for me to have approached the Empty Quarter without the initial backing which I received from the Middle East Anti-Locust Unit, but once I had been there and had made friends with the Bedu I could travel where I wished. I had no need to worry about international boundaries that did not even exist on maps.

I had already seen plenty of locusts in the Sudan, and during the year I was at Dessie I had watched swarms rolling across the horizon like cluds of smoke as they arrived on the Abyssinian uplands from their breeding places in Arabia. I had watched them going past, long-legged in wavering flight, as thick in the air as snowflakes in a storm. I had seen branches

broken from trees by the weight of the settled swarms, and green fields stripped bare in a few hours; but although I knew how destructive they could be, I knew practically nothing about their habits. Therefore, before going to the Empty Quarter, I was sent to Saudi Arabia for two months to learn about locusts from Vesey FitzGerald, who was running a campaign there. Few Europeans had previously been allowed to enter Saudi Arabia, and almost all of them had been confined to Jidda, the port on the Red sea, where the diplomats and the commercial community lived. Locust officers, however, were allowed to travel freely in nearly all parts of the country.

During the war a species of locust called the 'desert locust' had threatened the Middle East with famine. It was known that one of the main breeding grounds was the Arabian peninsula, and in 1943-4 the Middle East Anti-Locust Unit was given permission by King Abd al Aziz ibn Saud to carry out a campaign against them in Saudi Arabia.

Vesey FitzGerald told me of the discoveries which had been made in recent years and which were the reason for my journey into the Empty Quarter. Dr. Uvarov, who was head of the Anti-Locust Research Centre in London, had discovered that both the desert locust and a large solitary grasshopper belonged to the same species, although they differed in their habits, their colour, and even in the structure of their bodies to such an extent that naturalists had named and described them as separate species. These solitary grasshoppers occasionally developed gregarious habits that were probably due to overcrowding. Their numbers would increase after a season of plentiful vegetation, and then in the next dry season when they were confined to a smaller area they would swarm and migrate, ceasing to be solitary grasshoppers and becoming desert locusts. The small initial swarms increased very rapidly, for locusts breed several times a year, and each locust lays as many as a hundred eggs

at a time. The eggs hatch in about three weeks and the young locusts or hoppers reach maturity in about six weeks.

In Saudi Arabia with Vesey FitzGerald I saw densely packed bands of hoppers extending over a front of several miles and with a depth of a hundred yards or more, and yet he told me that these were only small bands. I knew that with a favourable wind locusts can cover enormous distances, but I was amazed when he told me that swarms can breed in India during the monsoon, move in the autumn to southern Persia or Arabia, breed there again, and then pass on to the Sudan or East Africa. Some of these swarms cover two hundred square miles or more. Eventually disease attacks them and they vanish as quickly as they had appeared. Then for a time there are no more locusts in the world, only solitary grasshoppers.

Doctor Uvarov believed that the 'outbreak centres' were restricted to certain definite areas, and that if these could be located and controlled it would be possible to prevent the solitary grasshoppers from ever swarming. The first thing to do was to locate all these outbreak centres. He thought that some of them might be in southern Arabia, especially at Mughshin, where Thomas had discovered that the great watercourses which ran inland from the coastal mountains of Dhaufar ended against the sands of the Empty Quarter. Dhaufar was known to get the monsoon, and it seemed probable that enough water flowed inland each year to produce permanent vegetation along the edge of the sands. If this were so, the area would almost certainly be an outbreak centre. I was to go there and find out, but so little was known about this part of southern Arabia that wherever I went I could collect useful information.

I arrived in Aden at the end of September 1945, visited the mountains along the Yemen frontier, and on 15th October flew to Salala, the capital of Dhaufar, which lies about two-thirds of the way along the southern coast of Arabia. It was

from there that I was to start my journey. While at Salala I stayed with the RAF in their camp outside the town. It was on a bare stony plain which was shut in by the Qarra mountains a few miles away, and had been set up during the war when an air route from Aden to India was opened. This route was no longer used, but once a week an aeroplane came to Salala from Aden.

Dhaufar belonged to the Sultan of Muscat, and he had insisted, when he allowed the RAF to establish themselves there, that none of them should visit the town or travel anywhere outside the perimeter of the camp unless accompanied by one of his guards, and that none of them should speak to any of the local inhabitants. These restrictions also applied to me while I was staying in the camp. In the case of the RAF they seemed to me to be reasonable, designed to prevent incidents between airmen who knew nothing of Arabs and tribesmen who were armed, quick-tempered, and suspicious of all strangers; but applied to me, who had come to travel with the people, they were extremely irksome. They meant that I had to make all my arrangements through the Wali, or Governor.

About 1877 Dhaufar had been occupied, after centuries of tribal anarchy, by a force belonging to the Sultan of Muscat, but in 1896 the tribes rebelled, surprised the fort that had been built at Salala, and murdered the garrison. It was several months before the Sultan was able to reassert his authority, which, however, has since remained largely nominal except on the plain surrounding the town.

The morning after my arrival I went into Salala to call on the Wali. Salala is a small town, little more than a village. It lies on the edge of the sea and has no harbour, the rollers from the Indian Ocean sweeping on to the white sands beneath the coconut palms that fringe the shore. When I arrived fishermen were netting sardines, and piles of these fish were drying in the

sun. The whole town reeked of their decay. The Sultan's palace, white and dazzling in the strong sunlight, was the most conspicuous building, and clustered around it was the small *suq* or market, a number of flat-roofed mud houses, and a labyrinth of mat shelters, fences, and narrow lanes. The market consisted of only a dozen shops, but it was the best shopping centre between Sur and the Hadhramaut, a distance of eight hundred miles. On my way to the palace I passed the mosque, near which were some old stone buildings and also an extensive graveyard. Scattered on the plain around the town were various ruins, all that remained of a legendary past, for Dhaufar is said to have been the Ophir of the Bible.

The successive civilizations whose prosperity caused the Romans to name all this part of Arabia 'Arabia Felix' had been farther to the west. The Minaeans had developed a civilization as early as 1000 B.C. in the north-eastern part of the Yemen. They were traders, with colonies as far north as Maan near the gulf of Aqaba, and they depended for their prosperity on frankincense from Dhaufar which they marketed in Egypt and Syria. They were succeeded by the Sabaeans, who in turn were succeeded by the Himyarites. This southern Arabian civilization, which lasted for 1,500 years, came to an end in the middle of the sixth century A.D., but while it lasted this remote land acquired a reputation for fabulous wealth. For centuries Egypt, Assyria, and the Seleucids schemed and fought to control the desert route along which the frankincense was carried northwards, and in 24 B.C. the Emperor Augustus sent an army under Aelius Gallus, prefect of Egypt, to conquer the lands where this priceless gum originated. The army marched southwards for nine hundred miles, but lack of water eventually forced it to retire. This was the only time any European power had ever tried to invade Arabia.

As I entered the town of Salala I passed a small caravan, two

men with four camels tied head to tail, and when I questioned the guard who was with me he said that these camels were carrying *mughur*, or frankincense. Today, however, the trade is small and of little value, hardly more important in the market at Salala than the buying and selling of goats and firewood.

My attention was caught by the men who led the camels. They were small and wiry, about five feet four inches in height, and were dressed in a length of dark-blue cloth wound round their waists, with an end thrown over one shoulder; the indigo had run out from the cloth and smeared their chests and arms. They were bare headed, and their hair was long and untidy. Both of them wore daggers and carried rifles. My guard said that they were Bedu from beyond the mountains and that they belonged to the Bait Kathir. In the market-place were more of them, while others waited outside the palace gates. They reminded me of the tribesmen whom I had seen recently at Dhala on the Yemen border, and seemed very different to the Arabs from the great Bedu tribes I had met in Syria and the Najd.

The palace gates were guarded by armed men dressed in long Arab shirts and head-cloths. Some of them were from Oman and the rest were slaves; none were local tribesmen. One of them took me into the reception hall, where I met the Wali. He was a townsman from Oman, large and portly. He was dressed in a white shirt reaching to the ground, a brown cloak, embroidered with gold, and a Kashmiri shawl which was loosely wrapped round his head. He wore a large curved dagger at the middle of his stomach. I greeted him in Arabic, and before we started our discussion I ate a few dates and drank three cups of bitter black coffee handed to me by one of his retainers.

The Wali told me that he had been instructed by the Sultan to collect a party of Bedu with camels to take me to Mughshin. He said that he had arranged for forty-five Bedu to go with me and that now he would send messengers into the desert to

fetch them. I thanked him, but suggested that forty-five were far more than I needed, and that a dozen would be quite enough. I knew that the British Consul in Muscat, when he got permission for me to do this journey, had agreed with the Sultan that the size of the party should be fixed by the Wali, and that I was to pay the equivalent of ten shillings a day to each man who went with me. I realized that everyone here regarded my journey as a heaven-sent opportunity to enrich himself, and that they would all try to make my party as large as possible. The Wali now insisted that, as there was a serious risk of my meeting raiders, he could not take the responsibility of allowing me to go to Mughshin with fewer than forty-five men, and that the Bedu themselves would not agree to go with a smaller party. I knew there had been raiding near Mughshin when Bertram Thomas went there in 1920, but as he was the only European who had ever crossed the Qarra mountains, which I had seen that morning six or eight miles beyond the camp, I was completely ignorant of what conditions were now like in the desert beyond. Eventually, after several meetings with the Wali, I agreed to take thirty Arabs. The Wali told me they would be from the Bait Kathir tribe, and added that they would be ready to start in a fortnight.

I arranged to spend this time travelling in the Qarra mountains, which had been explored by Theodore and Mabel Bent in 1895 and by Bertram Thomas in 1929. The Wali said that he would send four of his retainers with me, two Omanis and two slaves, and that we should have to hire camels from the Qarra, who live in the mountains, changing them every time we crossed from one valley into the next, since each valley was owned by a different section of the tribe, and all of them were jealous of each other and much divided by feuds. He warned me, 'Don't trust them. These mountain folk are not like the Bedu from the desert. They are treacherous and thievish; altogether with-

out honour.'

It was obvious that, although the Qarra lived only a few miles from Salala, the Sultan of Muscat had little control over them. Arabs rule but do not administer. Their government is intensely individualistic, and is successful or unsuccessful according to the degree of fear and respect which the ruler commands, and his skill in dealing with individual men. Founded on an individual life their government is impermanent and liable to end in chaos at any moment. To Arab tribesmen this system is comprehensible and acceptable, and its success or failure should not be measured in terms of efficiency and justice as judged by western standards. To these tribesmen security can be bought too dearly by loss of individual freedom.

Two days later we rode our camels across the stony plain of Jarbib; we passed some cultivation and went on towards Jabal Qarra, which is about two thousand feet high, and is flanked on either side by much higher mountains which close in on the sea. Some peculiarity in the shape of these mountains draws the monsoon clouds, so that the rain concentrates upon the southern slopes of Jabal Qarra, which are in consequence covered with mist and rain throughout the summer and were now dark with jungles in full lead after the monsoon. All the way along the south Arabian coast for 1,400 miles from Perim to Sur, only these twenty miles get a regular rainfall. The mountains on either side are often beautiful, especially at dawn and sunset when borrowed colours soften the austerity of rock and sand, but they are seldom touched with green. Usually the few camel-thorns, which throw a thin mesh of shadow over the darkly patinated rock, rustle dryly in the breeze. But on Jabal Qarra the jungle trees are wreathed with jasmine and giant convolvulus and roped together with lianas. Massive tamarinds grow in the valleys, and on the downs great fig-trees rise above the wind-rippled grass, like oaks in an English park.

We camped in the mouth of a valley near a Qarra village. To my unpractised eye these tribesmen were similar in appearance to the Bait Kathir whom I had seen in Salala, but they spoke their own language, whereas the Bait Kathir spoke Arabic. Three tribes, the Qarra, Mahra, and Harasis, as well as the remnants of others like the Shahara, speak different dialects of common origin and are known to the Arab-speaking tribes as the Ahl al Hadara. Bertram Thomas had made some study of these dialects, sufficient to establish that they were closely related to the ancient Semitic languages of the Minaeans, Sabaeans, and Himyarites. He suggested that Hadara may perhaps be identified with Hadoram, who is given in Genesis as one of the sons of Joktan, a descendant of Shem, and that Hadhramaut, the present-day name of the country immediately to the west of the Mahra country, could be connected with Hazaramaveth, the brother of Hadoram.

As we climbed the mountainside I noticed Paradise flycatchers, rufous and black, with long white streamers in their tails, and brilliant butterflies. They were in keeping with the jungle which surrounded us, and as unexpected in Arabia. Then we came out on to the downs and camped near the top of the mountain. I walked to the watershed, anxious to see what lay beyond, and found myself standing between two worlds. To the south were green meadows where cattle grazed, thickets and spreading trees, whereas a stone's throw to the north was empty desert—sand, rocks, and a few wisps of withered grass. The transition was as abrupt as it is between the irrigated fields and the desert in the Nile valley. Here the dividing line followed the crest of the mountains.

The Qarra were camped in family groups on the downs. They owned small humpless cattle, a few camels, and flocks of goats, but no sheep, horses, or dogs. Most of the families owned twenty to thirty cows. Thomas mentioned in his book that when a man

died his family sacrificed half his cows. He thought that this custom was peculiar to them, but apparently the Wahiba, a Bedu tribe in Oman, do the same. These Qarra told me that they would remain here till January and then move down to the foot of the mountain and collect in large cattle camps—one of which we had passed on the way—small grass shelters crowded together in the mouth of the valley. When the monsoon started they would move back into the valleys and shelter their animals in caves in the limestone cliffs, or in low dark byres made of stones and roofed with matted grass.

I stayed there for ten days. Then I heard rumours that the Bait Kathir, who were to go with me, were in Salala, and I decided to go back. Some Qarra came with us. They carried butter, firewood, and a pot of wild honey which they would sell in the market. They said they would buy dried sardines, which they feed to their animals later in the season when the grazing gets scarce.

On my return the Wali invited me to meet some of the Bait Kathir who were to go with me. There were eight of them sitting with him when I arrived. Six wore head-cloths and Arab shirts reaching half way down their calves; two were bareheaded and dressed only in loin-cloths. All wore daggers and cartridge belts; they had left their rifles outside the audience hall. While we drank coffee and ate dates I wondered how I should get on with these people. An old man with a fringe of white beard and twinkling eyes, Salim Tamtaim, was their head sheikh. The Wali said he was eighty, but still vigorous, having just married another wife; and the old man exclaimed, 'Eh, by God, I can still ride and shoot.' I noticed especially a man called Sultan who looked more like a Red Indian than an Arab. The others deferred to him rather than to Tamtaim, and I remembered that the Qarra had said, 'Sultan has arrived in Salala with the Bait Kathir.' It was obvious that he was their leader.

He had a striking face, austere, lined, and hairless, except for a few hairs growing in a curl on his chin. The Wali pointed to another of them and said, 'Musallim will shoot meat for you. He is famous as a hunter.' The man of whom he spoke was dressed in a clean white shirt, and an embroidered head-cloth. He was a small man, like all the others, but he was more solidly built and slightly bow-legged. He looked more of a townsman than a Bedu. I arranged with them that they should fetch me next morning from the RAF camp.

They arrived after breakfast accompanied by a large crowd from Salala. They were a wild-looking lot, most of them wearing only loin-cloths, and all of them armed with rifles and daggers. I showed old Tamtaim and Sultan the food I had provided for the journey—rice, flour, dates, sugar, tea, coffee, and liquid butter. With the help of the RAF storeman I had done it up in sacks in what seemed to me suitable-sized loads, but Sultan said at once that they were too heavy. They undid them and started to repack, pouring the rice, flour, and sugar into dirty-looking goatskin bags. They argued endlessly among themselves, shouting in harsh voices. The camels were led up and couched, but they struggled roaring to their feet, and were couched again. An unkempt savage with inflamed eyes and a tangled mop of hair refused to allow a camel to be loaded, and started to lead it away. Someone else seized the camel's halter, and I thought they were going to fight. Everyone else gathered round and shouted. I could understand little of what they said. Eventually the camel was led back and loaded.

When they were nearly ready I went into the hut where I had been staying and put on my Arab clothes. To have worn European clothes would have alienated these Bait Kathir at once, for although a few of them had travelled with Bertram Thomas, most of them had not even spoken to an Englishman before. I wore a loin-cloth, a long shirt, and head-cloth with the

ends twisted round my head in their fashion. None of these Bait Kathir wore the black woollen head-rope which is a conspicuous feature of Arab dress in the north.

As this was the first time I had worn Arab dress I felt extremely self-conscious. My shirt was new, white, and rather stiff, very noticeable among the Bedu's dingy clothes. They were all small men, and as I am six feet two I felt as conspicuous as a lighthouse, and as different from them as one of the RAF.

On previous journeys I had commanded respect as an Englishman, and in the Sudan I had the prestige of being a government official. When I had travelled in the desert there I had tried to break through the barrier that lay between me and my companions, but I had always felt rather condescending. Now for the first time I was travelling without a servant. Quite alone among a crowd of Arabs whom I had never seen before, I should be with them for three or four months, even for six if I undertook the second journey to the Hadhramaut which I was already planning. At first glance they seemed to be little better than savages, as primitive as the Danakil, but I was soon disconcerted to discover that, while they were prepared to tolerate me as a source of very welcome revenue, they never doubted my inferiority. They were Muslims and Bedu and I was neither. They had never heard of the English, for all Europeans were known to them simply as Christians, or more probably infidels, and nationality had no meaning for them. They had heard vaguely of the war as a war between the Christians, and of the Aden government as a Christian government. Their world was the desert and they had little if any interest in events that happened outside it. They identified me with the Christians from Aden, but had no idea of any power greater than that of Ibn Saud. One day they spoke of a sheikh in the Hadhramaut who had recently defied the government and against whom the Aden levies had carried out some rather inconclusive

operations. I realized that they thought that this force was all that my tribe could muster. They judge power by the number and effectiveness of fighting men, not by machines which they could not understand.

I shall always remember the first camp at the foot of the Qarra mountains. We had stopped in a shallow watercourse which ran out into the plain, and we had dumped our kit wherever there was room for it among thorn bushes and boulders. The others were soon busy, greasing water-skins, twisting rope, mending saddles, and looking to their camels. I sat near them, very conscious of their scrutiny. I longed to go over and join them in their tasks, but I was kept awkwardly apart by my reserve. For the first and last time I felt lonely in Arabia. Eventually old Tamtaim hobbled over and invited me to drink coffee with them, and Sultan fetched my blankets and saddle-bags and put them down beside the fire. Later Musallim cooked rice and six of us fed together.

I asked them about the Rub al Khali, or the Empty Quarter, the goal of my ambitions. No one had heard of it. 'What is he talking about? What does he want?' 'God alone knows. I cannot understand his talk.' At last Sultan exclaimed, 'Oh! he means The Sands,' and I realized that this was their name for the great desert of southern Arabia. I have heard townsmen and villagers in the Najd and the Hajaz refer to it as the Rub al Khali, but never Bedu who lived upon its borders.

I found it difficult to understand their talk. In the Sudan I had learnt Arabic among tribes who spoke it as their second language. I had really only begun to speak it when I was in Syria during the war. But there was a great difference between Syrian Arabic and the dialect of the Bait Kathir, whose pronunciation and intonation were entirely different from anything I had heard before, and many of whose words were archaic. The Bait Kathir were equally puzzled by my speech, but this

did not stop them from asking questions about 'The Christians'. 'Did they know God? Did they fast and pray? Did they own camels? Were they tribesmen? How did they bury their dead?' It was always questions such as these that they asked me. None of them had any interest in the cars and aeroplanes which they had seen in the RAF camp. The rifles with which they fought were all that they had accepted from the outside world, the only modern invention which interested them.

They spoke of Bertram Thomas who had travelled with them. Bedu notice everything and forget nothing. Garrulous by nature, they reminisce endlessly, whiling away with their chatter the long marching hours, and talking late into the night round their campfires. Their life is at all times desperately hard, and they are merciless critics of those who fall short in patience, good humour, generosity, loyalty, or courage. They make no allowance for the stranger. Whoever lives with the Bedu must accept Bedu conventions, and conform to Bedu standards. Only those who have journeyed with them can appreciate the strain of such a life. These tribesmen are accustomed since birth to the physical hardships of the desert, to drink the scanty bitter water of the sand, to eat gritty unleavened bread, to endure the maddening irritation of driven sand, intense cold, heat, and blinding glare in a land without shade or cloud. But more wearing still is the nervous tension. I was to learn how hard it is to live crowded together with people of another faith, speech, and culture in the solitude of the desert, how easy to be provoked to senseless wrath by their importunities and improvidence.

Bertram Thomas had reason to be impatient. He lost precious months of the cold weather waiting in Dhaufar for his guide, bin Kalut, and the other Rashid to arrive. The previous year he had reached Mughshin, and there, upon the threshold of the Sands, had been thwarted by his Bait Kathir compan-

ions. He was far from being a Bedu by nature, and yet I never heard these Bedu speak a disparaging word about him. I have known them criticize him for tiring their camels with the heavy foreign saddle on which he rode, or comment on his preference for sleeping apart from his companions; but these were idiosyncrasies which they accepted even if they never understood them, things which they now recalled with a smile.

He was the first European to come among them and he won their respect by his good nature, generosity, and determination. They remembered him as a good travelling companion. When I went among these exclusive tribesmen sixteen years after he had left them, I was welcomed because I belonged to the same tribe as Thomas. I had only met him twice, in Cairo during the war, and then only for a few minutes. I should have liked to meet him again before he died, to tell him how much I owed to him.

THE SANDS OF GHANIM

WILFRED THESIGER

After travelling to the sands of Ghanim and Mughshin we return to Salala. There I meet the Rashid for the first time and travel with them to the Hadhramaut.

THIS FIRST journey on the fringes of the Empty Quarter was only important to me as my probation for the far longer and more difficult journeys that were to follow. During the next five months I learnt to adapt myself to Bedu ways and to the rhythm of their life.

My companions were always awake and moving about as soon as it was light. I think the cold prevented them from sleeping, except in snatches, for they had little to cover them other than the clothes they wore, and during these winter nights there was often a ground frost. Still half asleep, I would hear them rousing the camels from their couching places. The camels roared and gurgled as they were moved, and the Arabs shouted to each other in their harsh, far-carrying voices. The camels would shuffle past, their forelegs hobbled to prevent them straying, their breath white on the cold air. A boy would drive them towards the nearest bushes. Then someone would give the call to prayer:

God is most great.
I testify that there is no god but God.
I testify that Muhammad is the Prophet of God.
Come to prayer!
Come to salvation!
Prayer is better than sleep.

God is most great.
There is no god but God.

Each line except the last was repeated twice. The lingering music of the words, strangely compelling even to me who did not share their faith, hung over the silent camp. I would watch old Tamtaim, who slept near me, washing before he prayed. Every act had to be performed exactly and in order. He washed his face, hands, and feet, sucked water into his nostrils, put wet fingers into his ears, and passed wet hands over the top of his head. The Bait Kathir prayed singly, each man in his own place and in his own time, whereas the Rashid, with whom I later travelled, prayed together and in line. Tamtaim swept the ground before him, placed his rifle in front of him, and then prayed facing towards Mecca. He stood upright, bent forwards with his hands on his knees, knelt, and then bowed down till his forehead touched the ground. Several times he performed these ritual movements, slowly and impressively, while he recited the formal prayer. Sometimes, after he had finished his prayers, he intoned long passages from the Koran, and the very sound of the words had the quality of great poetry. Many of these Bedu knew only the opening verse of the Koran:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds!
The Compassionate, the Merciful!
King on the day of reckoning!
Thee *only* do we worship and to Thee do we cry for help.
Guide us on the straight path,
The path of those to whom Thou has been gracious;
With whom Thou art not angry, and who go not astray.

This verse they repeated several times as they prayed. Muslims should pray at dawn, at noon, in the afternoon, at sunset, and after dark. The Bait Kathir prayed at dawn and sunset, but most of them neglected the other prayers.

A little later I would hear bell-like notes as someone pounded coffee in a brass mortar, varying his stroke to produce the semblance of a tune. I would get up. In the desert we slept in our clothes so that all I had to do was to adjust my head-cloth, pour a little water over my hands, splash, it over my face, and then go over to the fire and greet the Arabs who were sitting round it, 'Salam Alaikum' (Peace be on you), and they would stand up and answer, 'Alaikum as Salam' (On you be peace). Bedu always rise to return a salutation. If we were not in a hurry we would bake bread for breakfast, otherwise we would eat scraps set aside from our meal the night before. We would drink tea, sweet and black, and then coffee, which was bitter, black, and very strong. The coffee-drinking was a formal business, not to be hurried. The server stood as he poured a few drops into a small china cup, little bigger than an egg cup, which he handed to each of us in turn, bowing as he did so. Each person was served until he shook the cup slightly as he handed it back, signifying that he had had enough. It was not customary to take more than three cups.

The camels were now rounded up and brought in to be saddled and loaded. Sultan went over to fetch Umbrausha, the camel I was riding. She was a magnificent animal, a famous thoroughbred from Oman. The other camels seemed to me to be very small, judged by Sudanese standards, and all of them were in poor condition. Sultan had told me that there had been no proper rain in the desert for the last three years and that their animals were weak from hunger.

The camels which these Bedu rode were females. In the Sudan I had always ridden on bulls, since both there and in those parts of the Sahara where I had travelled the females are kept for milk and never ridden. Throughout Arabia, however, females are ridden from choice. The tribes which carry goods for hire use the bulls as pack animals, but the Bait Kathir

slaughter nearly all the male calves at birth. They live largely on camels' milk, and have no desire to squander food on animals which can make no return, since there is no carrying trade in this desert.

Loading the camels was a noisy business, for most of them roared and snarled whenever they were approached, and especially when the loads were placed on their backs. I asked Sultan how they managed on raids when silence was important, and he told me that they then tied the camels' mouths. The noise which our camels were making would have been heard two miles away or even farther in the desert stillness. Sultan had brought Umbrausha over to the place where I had slept, leading her by her head-rope. He now jerked downwards, on it, saying 'Khrr, Khrr', and she dropped to her knees; she then swayed backwards, and after settling her hind legs under her, sank down on to her hocks; she then shuffled her knees forward until she was comfortably settled on the ground, her chest resting on the horny pad between her forelegs. Sultan tied one of her forelegs with the end of the head-rope to prevent her rising while he was loading her. Umbrausha was properly trained and this was not necessary, but an Arab near us was having a lot of trouble with a young animal. She struggled back to her feet after he had couched her, and even after he had tied her knees she half rose and then pivoted round among the loads which he had been trying to put on her back. She snarled and gurgled, spewing half-chewed green cud over his shirt. 'May raiders get you,' he shouted at her in exasperation. She looked as if she would bite his head off at any moment, but female camels are really very gentle and do not bite. Male camels will bite, especially when they are rutting, and they inflict appalling injuries. I had treated a man in the Sudan who had been bitten in the arm and the bone was splintered to fragments.

The southern Bedu ride on the small Omani saddle instead

of on the double-poled saddle of northern Arabia to which I was accustomed. Sultan picked up my saddle, which was shaped like a small double-wooden vice, fitted over palm-fibre pads, and girthed it tightly over Umbrausha's withers just in front of the hump. This wooden vice was really the tree on which he now built the saddle. He next took a crescent-shaped fibre pad which rose in a peak at the back and, after fitting it round the back and sides of the camel's hump, attached it with a loop of string to his tree. He then put a blanket over the pad, and folded my rug over this, placed my saddle-bags over the rug, and finally put a black sheepskin on top of the saddle-bags. He had already looped a woollen cord under the camel's stomach so that it passed over the rear pad, and he now took one end of his cord past the tree and back along the other side of the saddle to the original loop. When he drew the cord tight it held everything firmly in place. He had now built a platform over the camel's hump and the fibre pad which was behind it. Sitting on this, the rider was much farther back on the camel than he would have been if riding on the northern saddle, which is set over the camel's withers.

My saddle-bags were heavy with money and spare ammunition, and the small medicine-chest which I took with me. Most of the other riding camels carried forty or fifty pounds of rice or flour; all of them would be heavily laden when we were travelling long distances between wells and all our goatskins would be filled with water. I had hired four baggage camels, and these carried between a hundred and fifty and two hundred pounds.

When all was ready we set off on foot. We always walked for the first two or three hours. While we were still in the mountains each of us led his camel, or tied her by her head-rope to the tail of the one in front. Later, when we were on the gravel plains or in the sands, we turned them loose to find whatever food they could as they drifted along. We would walk behind

them with our rifles on our shoulders, held by the muzzle. This is the way Bedu always carry their rifles. At first I found it disconcerting, for I knew that all the rifles were loaded. Then I got used to it and did the same myself. When at length the sun grew hot we rode. The Bedu never bothered to stop their mounts and make them kneel before they got up, but pulled down their heads, put a foot on their necks, and were lifted up to within easy reach of the saddle. At first they insisted on couching my camel when I wished to mount. This was meant as a kindness. So it was when they begged me to ride instead of walking as we started in the morning, and when they frequently offered me a drink, but I found this constant attention irksome, because I was only anxious for them to treat me as one of themselves.

A Bedu who is going to mount a couched camel stands behind her tail. He then leans forward and catches the wooden tree with his left hand as he places his left knee in the saddle. Immediately the camel feels his weight she starts to rise, lifting her hindquarters off the ground, and he swings his right leg over the saddle. The camel then rises to her knees and with another jerk is on her feet. The Bedu either sit with a leg on either side of the hump, or kneel in the saddle, sitting on the upturned soles of their feet, in which case they are riding entirely by balance. They prefer to ride kneeling, especially if they mean to gallop. It is an extraordinary feat of balance, for riding a galloping camel, especially over rough ground, is like sitting on a bucking horse. A Bedu usually carries his rifle slung under his arm and parallel with the ground, which must add greatly to the difficulty of balancing. I could not ride kneeling; it was too uncomfortable and too precarious even at a walk. I had therefore to sit continuously in one position, which became very tiring on a long march. The first time I rode a camel in the Sudan I was so stiff next day I could scarcely

move. This had not happened to me again, but I was afraid that it might when I started on this journey, for it was seven years since I had last ridden any distance. It would have been humiliating, for I had claimed that I was already an experienced rider.

In Darfur I had fed my camels on grain and had trotted them. A good camel travelling at about five or six miles an hour is very comfortable, but when walking even the best throw a continuous and severe strain on the rider's back. In southern Arabia the Bedu never trot when they are on a journey, for their camels eat only what they can find, which is generally very little, and have to travel long distances between wells. I had already learnt on the journeys to Bir Natrun and to Tibesti not to press a camel beyond its normal walking pace when travelling in the desert. I was soon to discover how considerate the Bedu were of their camels, always ready to suffer hardship themselves in order to spare their animals. Several times while travelling with them and approaching a well, I have expected them to push on and fill the water-skins, as our water was finished, but they have insisted on halting for the night short of the well, saying that farther on there was no grazing.

Whenever we passed any bushes we let our camels dawdle to strip mouthfuls of leaves and thorns, and whenever we came to richer grazing we halted to let them graze at will. I was making a time-and-compass traverse of our route and these constant halts were frustrating, making it difficult to estimate the distance which we had covered. On good going, where there was no feeding to delay us, we averaged three miles an hour, but in the Sands, where the dunes were steep and difficult, we might only do one mile an hour.

It often seemed incredible to me, especially when I was on foot and conscious of the steps I was taking that we could

cover such enormous distances going at this pace. Sometimes I counted my footsteps to a bush or to some other mark, and this number seemed but a trifle deducted from the sum that lay ahead of us. Yet I had no desire to travel faster. In this way there was time to notice things—a grasshopper under a bush, a dead swallow on the ground, the tracks of a hare, bird's nest, the shape and colour of ripples on the sand, the bloom of tiny seedlings pushing through the soil. There was time to collect a plant or to look at a rock. The very slowness of our march diminished its monotony. I thought how terribly boring it would be to rush about this country in a car.

We drifted along, our movements governed by an indefinable common consent. There was seldom much discussion; we either halted or we went on. Sometimes we would start in the morning, expecting to do a long march, come unexpectedly on grazing soon after we had started, and halt for the day. At other times we planned to stop somewhere, but finding when we got to our destination that there was no grazing, we would push on without a halt till dark or even later. If we stopped in the middle of the day we would hurriedly unload the camels, hobble them, and turn them loose to graze. Then we might cook bread or porridge, but more often we ate dates. Always we drank coffee, which my companions craved for as a drug. Some of them smoked, and this was their only other indulgence. No one ever smoked without sharing his pipe with the others; they would squat round while one sifted a few grains of tobacco from the dust in the bottom of a small leather bag which he carried inside his shirt next to his skin. He would stuff this tobacco into a small stemless pipe cut out of soft stone, or into an old cartridge-case open a both ends, light it with a flint and steel, take two or three deep puffs and hand it to the next person. If we were travelling when they wished to smoke, they stopped, got off, squatted down, smoked, and then climbed back into

their saddles.

We always camped crowded together. All around us was endless space, and yet in our camps there was scarcely room to move, especially when the camels had been brought in for the night and couched around the fires. When we started on this journey we had divided ourselves into messes of five or six people, who each carried their own food. I fed with old Tamtaim, Sultan, and three others. One was Mabkhaut, a slightly built man of middle age; he was good-humoured and considerate, but he seldom spoke, which was unusual among these garrulous Bedu. Another was Musallim bin Tafl, who had been pointed out to me by the Wali as a skilful hunter. He was avaricious even by Bedu standards, quick-witted, and hard-working. He was often in Salala, hanging about the palace, and had had in consequence the unusual experience of some contact with the outside world. He volunteered to do the cooking for our party.

When we had enough water he would cook rice, but generally he made bread for our evening meal. He would scoop out three or four pounds of flour from one of the goatskin bags in which we carried our supplies, and would then damp this, add a little salt, and mix it into a thick paste. He would divide the dough into six equal-sized lumps, pat each lump between his hands until it had become a disc about half an inch thick, and would then put it down on a rug while he shaped the others, Someone else would have lighted the fire, sometimes with matches but generally with flint and steel. There was plenty of flint in the desert and the blade of a dagger to use as steel. They would tear small strips off their shirts or head-cloths for tinder, with the result that each day their clothes became more tattered in appearance. Musallim would rake some embers out of the fire to make a glowing bed, and then drop the cakes of dough on to it. The heat having sealed the outside of the cakes, he would

turn them over almost immediately, and then, scooping a hollow in the sand under the embers, would bury them and spread the hot sand and embers over them. I would watch bubbles breaking through this layer of sand and ashes as the bread cooked. Later he would uncover the cakes, brush off the sand and ashes, and put them aside to cool. When we wished to feed he would give one to each of us, and we would sit in a circle and, in turn, dip pieces of this bread into a small bowl containing melted butter, or soup if we happened to have anything from which to make it. The bread was brick hard or soggy, according to how long it had been cooked, and always tasted as if it had been made from sawdust. Sometimes Musallim shot a gazelle or an oryx, and only then did we feed well. After we had eaten we would sit round the fire and talk. Bedu always shout at each other, even if they are only a few feet apart. Everyone could therefore hear what was being said by everyone else in the camp, and anyone who was interested in a conversation round another fire could join in from where he was sitting.

Soon after dinner I would spread out my rug and sheepskin and, putting my dagger and cartridge belt under the saddle-bags which I used as a pillow, lie down beneath three blankets with my rifle beside me. While I was among the Arabs I was anxious to behave as they did, so that they would accept me to some extent as one of themselves. I had therefore to sit as they did, and I found this very trying, for my muscles were not accustomed to this position. I was glad when it was night and I could lie down and be at ease. I had sat on the ground before, but then I had been travelling with men whom I knew well, and with them I could relax and lie about. Now I would get off my camel after a long march and have to sit formally as Arabs sit. It took me a long time to get used to this. For the same reason I went barefooted as they did, and at first this was

torture. Eventually the soles of my feet became hardened, but even after five years they were soft compared with theirs.

At first I found living with the Bedu very trying, and during the years that I was with them I always found the mental strain greater than the physical. It was as difficult for me to adapt myself to their way of life, and especially to their outlook, as it was for them to accept what they regarded as my eccentricities. I had been used to privacy, and here I had none. If I wanted to talk privately to someone it was difficult. Even if we went a little apart, others would be intrigued and immediately come to find out what we were talking about and join in the conversation. Every word I said was overheard, and every move I made was watched. At first I felt very isolated among them. I knew they thought that I had unlimited money, and I suspected that they were trying to exploit me. I was exasperated by their avarice, and wearied by their importunities. Whenever during these early days one of them approached me, I thought, 'Now what is *he* going to ask for?' and I would be irritated by the childish flattery with which they invariably prefaced their requests. I had yet to learn that no Bedu thinks it shameful to beg, and that often he will look at the gift which he has received and say, 'Is this all that you are going to give me?' I was seeing the worst side of their character, and was disillusioned and resentful, and irritated by their assumption of superiority. In consequence I was assertive and unreasonable.

Some rain had fallen three months earlier on the northern slopes of the Qarra mountains, and there was a little green grazing in some of the valley-bottoms where freshets had run down. The Bedu were loath to leave this grazing and push on into the empty wastes which they knew lay ahead. They dawdled along doing one hour's marching one day, and perhaps two the next, while my exasperation mounted. Whenever we came to a patch of grazing they vowed that it was the last

and insisted on stopping; and then next day we would find more grazing and stop again. Anyway most of this grazing did not seem to me to be worth stopping for. Usually it was only a few green shrubs. I did not yet realize how rare any fresh vegetation was in this desert. I still thought in terms of so many marching hours a day, which had been easy to do in the Sudan where we hand-fed our camels. I fretted at the constant delays, counting the wasted days instead of revelling in this leisurely travel. Unfairly I suspected that the Arabs were trying to lengthen our journey in order to collect more money from me. When in the evenings I would protest and insist that we must do proper marches, Sultan and the others would add to my exasperation by saying that I knew nothing about camels, which was true. I would, however, explain indignantly what a lot of experience I had had with them in the Sudan, I found it difficult to understand what they were saying and this added to my frustration.

Bedu, attracted from afar by the fresh grazing, were herding camels and goats in the valleys through which we passed. They were hungry, as Bedu always are, and they collected each evening in our camp to feed at our expense. Everyone had heard that the Christian had great quantities of food with him. These unwanted guests never waited for an invitation before sitting down with us to feed. They just joined us and shared whatever we had for as long as they were with us. Many of them followed us, turning up evening after evening. My companions accepted their presence with equanimity, since they would have done the same; and, anyway, no Bedu will turn a guest away unfed. But I was irritated by their assumption that we should feed them, and disturbed by their numbers. I realized that we had not brought enough food with us and that we were going to be short before we returned to Salala. In my more bitter moments I thought that Bedu life was one

long round of cadging and being cadged from.

It was three months before I returned to Salala. They were hard months of constant travel during which I learnt to admire my companions and to appreciate their skill. I soon found these tribesmen far easier to consort with than more progressive town Arabs who, after discarding their own customs and traditions, have adopted something of our ways. I myself infinitely preferred the Bedu's arrogant self-assurance to the Effendi's easily wounded susceptibilities. I was beginning to see the desert as the Bedu saw it, and to judge men as they judged them. I had come here looking for more than locusts, and was finding the life for which I sought.

Two memories in particular remain with me of this journey. I had turned aside into the sands of Ghanim with a dozen Arabs, while the others went on to Mughshin. It was eight days since we had left the well at Shisur and our water had been finished for twenty-four hours. We were near Bir Halu, or 'the sweet well', when we came on clumps of yellow-flowering tribulus, growing where a shower had fallen a few months before. We grazed our camels for a while, and I then suggested going on to the well, for I was thirsty. Eventually Tamtaim, Sultan and Musallim came on with me; the others said they would join us later after feeding their camels. We arrived at the well, unsaddled our camels, watered them, and then sat down near the well. No one had yet drunk. I was anxious not to appear impatient, but eventually I suggested we should do so. Sultan handed me a bowl of water. I offered it to old Tamtaim, but he told me to drink, saying that he would wait till the others came, adding that as they were his travelling companions it would be unseemly for him to drink till they arrived. I had already learnt that Bedu will never take advantage over a companion by feeding while he is absent, but this restraint seemed to me exaggerated. The others did not arrive until

five hours later, by which time I was thoroughly exasperated and very thirsty. Though the water looked deliciously cold and clear, it tasted like a strong dose of Epsom salts; I took a long draught and involuntarily spat it out. It was my first experience of water in the Sands.

A few days later we passed some tracks. I was not even certain that they were made by camels, for they were much blurred by the wind. Sultan turned to a grey-bearded man who was noted as a tracker and asked him whose tracks these were, and the man turned aside and followed them for a short distance. He then jumped off his camel, looked at the tracks where they crossed some hard ground, broke some camel droppings between his fingers, and rode back to join us. Sultan asked, 'Who were they?' and the man answered, 'They were Awamir. There are six of them. They have raided the Junuba on the southern coast and taken three of their camels. They have come here from Sahma and watered at Mughshin. They passed here ten days ago.' We had seen no Arabs for seventeen days and we saw none for a further twenty-seven. On our return we met some Bait Kathir near Jabal Qarra and, when we exchanged our news, they told us that six Awamir had raided the Junuba, killed three of them, and taken three of their camels. The only thing we did not already know was that they had killed anyone.

Here every man knew the individual tracks of his own camels, and some of them could remember the tracks of nearly every camel they had seen. They could tell at a glance from the depth of the foot-prints whether a camel was ridden or free, and whether it was in calf. By studying strange tracks they could tell the area from which the camel came. Camels from the Sands, for instance, have soft soles to their feet, marked with tattered strips of loose skin, whereas if they come from the gravel plains their feet are polished smooth. Bedu could tell

the tribe to which a camel belonged, for the different tribes have different breeds of camel, all of which can be distinguished by their tracks. From looking at their droppings they could often deduce where a camel had been grazing, and they could certainly tell when it had last been watered, and from their knowledge of the country they could probably tell where. Bedu are always well-informed about the politics of the desert. They know the alliances and enmities of the tribes and can guess which tribes would raid each other. No Bedu will ever miss a chance of exchanging news with anyone he meets, and he will ride far out of his way to get fresh news.

As a result of this journey I found that the country round Mughshin was suffering from many years of drought. If there had been grazing we would have found Arabs with their herds, but we had just travelled for forty-four days without seeing anyone. I asked my companions about floods and they told me that no water had reached Mughshin from the Qarra mountains since the great floods twenty-five years before. It was obviously not an 'outbreak centre' for desert locusts. I now decided to travel westwards to the Hadhramaut along the southern edge of the Sands, where I would be able to find out if floods ever reached these sands from the high Mahra mountains along the coast. No European had yet travelled in the country between Dhaufar and the Hadhramaut.

I had met with one of the Rashid sheikhs, called Musallim bin al Kamam, on my way to Mughshin, and had taken an immediate liking to him. I had asked him to meet me with some of his tribe in Salala in January, and to go with me to the Hadhramaut. I found bin al Kamam and some thirty Rashid waiting for me when I arrived in Salala on 7th January. I decided to keep Sultan and Musallim bin Tafl with me from the Bait Kathir and agreed to pay for fifteen Rashid, but bin al Kamam said that thirty men would come with us and

share this pay. He explained that the country through which we should pass was frequently raided by the Yemen tribes. He had news that more than two hundred Dahm were even then raiding the Manahil on the steppes to the east of the Hadhramaut.

The Rashid were kinsmen and allies of the Bait Kathir, both tribes belonging to the Al Kathir. They were dressed in long Arab shirts and head-cloths, which had been dyed a soft russet-brown with the juice of a desert shrub. They wore their clothes with distinction, even when they were in rags. They were small deft men, alert and watchful. Their bodies were lean and hard, trained to incredible endurance. Looking at them, I realized that they were very much alive, tense with nervous energy, vigorously controlled. They had been bred from the purest race in the world, and lived under conditions where only the hardiest and best could possibly survive. They were as fine-drawn and highly strung as thoroughbreds. Beside them the Bait Kathir seemed uncouth and assertive, lacking the final polish of the inner desert.

The Rashid and the Awamir were the tribes in southern Arabia who had adapted themselves to life in the Sands. Some of their sections lived in the central sands, the only place in the Empty Quarter with wells; others had moved right across the Sands to the Trucial Coast. The homelands of both the Rashid and the Awamir were on the steppes to the north-east and to the north of the Hadhramaut. The Bait Imani section of the Rashid still lived there, and we should pass through their territory on our way to the Hadhramaut. The Manahil lived farther to the west, between there and the Awamir. Beyond the Awamir were the Saar, bitter enemies of the Rashid. The Mahra, divided into many sections, lived in the mountains and on the plateau along the coast; beyond them were the Humum to the north of Mukalla.

The Bedu tribes of southern Arabia were insignificant in numbers compared with those of central and northern Arabia, where the tents of a single tribe might number thousands. In Syria I had seen the Shammar migrating, a whole people on the move, covering the desert with their herds, and had visited the summer camp of the Rualla, a city of black tents. In northern Arabia the desert merges into the sown and there is a gradual transition from Bedu to shepherds and cultivators. Damascus, Aleppo, Mosul, and Baghdad exert their influence on the desert. They are visited by Bedu, who see in their bazaars men of different races, cultures, and faiths. Even in the Najd the Bedu have occasional contact with towns and town life. But here scattered families moved over great distances seeking pasturage for a dozen camels. These Rashid, who roamed from the borders of the Hadhramaut to the Persian Gulf, numbered only three hundred men, while the Bait Kathir were about six hundred. But these Arabs were among the most authentic of the Bedu, the least affected by the outside world. In the south the desert runs down into the sea, continues into the kindlier deserts of the north, or ends against the black barren foothills of the Yemen or Oman. There were few towns within reach of the southern Bedu, and these they rarely visited.

My ambition was to cross the Empty Quarter. I had hoped that I might be able to do so with these Rashid after we had reached the Hadhramaut, but I realized when I talked with them that by then it would be too hot. I was resolved to return, and was content to regard this first year as training for later journeys. I knew that among the Rashid I had found the Arabs for whom I was looking.

It was on this journey that I met Salim bin Kabina. He was generally known as bin Kabina, 'the son of Kabina', who was his mother. In other parts of Arabia it is common practice

to call a man the son of his father; here it is more usual to use his mother's name. Bin Kabina was to be my inseparable companion during the five years I travelled in southern Arabia. He turned up while we were watering thirsty camels at a well that yielded only a few gallons an hour. For two days we worked day and night in relays. Conspicuous in a vivid red loin-cloth, and with his long hair falling round his naked shoulders, he helped us with our task. On the second day he announced that he was coming with me. The Rashid sheikhs advised me to take the boy and let him look after my things. I told him he must find himself a camel and a rifle. He grinned and said that he would find both, and did. He was about sixteen years old, about five feet five in height, and loosely built. He moved with a long, raking stride, like a camel, unusual among Bedu, who generally walk very upright with short steps. He was very poor, and the hardships of his life had marked him, so that his frame was gaunt and his face hollow. His hair was very long and always falling into his eyes, especially when he was cooking or otherwise busy. He would sweep it back impatiently with a thin hand He had a rather low forehead, large eyes, a straight nose, prominent cheekbones, and a big mouth with a long upper lip. His chin, delicately formed and rather pointed, was marked by a long scar, where he had been branded as a child to cure some illness. He had very white teeth which were always showing, for he was constantly talking and laughing. His father had died two years before and it had fallen on young bin Kabina to provide for his mother, young brother, and infant sister. I had met him at a critical moment in his life, although I only learnt this a week later.

We were walking behind the camels in the cool stillness of the early morning. Bin Kabina and I were a little apart from the others. He strode along, his body turned a little sideways as he talked, his red loin-cloth tight about his narrow hips. His rifle,

held on his shoulder by its muzzle, was rusty and very ancient, and I suspected that the firing-pin was broken. He was always taking it to pieces. He told me that a month earlier he had gone down to the coast to fetch a load of sardines, and on the way back his old camel had collapsed and died. He confessed, 'I wept as I sat there in the dark beside the body of my old grey camel. She was old, long past bearing, and she was very thin for there had been no rain in the desert for a long time; but she was my camel. The only one we had. That night, Umbarak, death seemed very close to me and my family. You see in the summer the Arabs collect round the wells; all the grazing gets eaten up for the distance of a day's journey and more; if we camped where there was grazing for the goats, how, without a camel, could we fetch water? How could we travel from one well to another?' Then he grinned at me and said, 'God brought you. Now I shall have everything.' Already I was fond of him. Attentive and cheerful, he eased the inevitable strain under which I lived, anticipating my wants. His comradeship provided a personal note in the still rather impersonal atmosphere of my desert life.

Two days later an old man came into our camp. He was limping, and even by Bedu standards he looked poor. He wore a torn loin-cloth, thin and grey with age, and carried an ancient rifle, similar to bin Kabina's. In his belt were two full and six empty cartridge cases, and a dagger in a broken sheath. The Rashid pressed forward to greet him, 'Welcome, Bakhit. Long life to you, uncle. Welcome, welcome a hundred times.' I wondered at the warmth of their greetings. The old man lowered himself upon the rug they had spread for him and ate the dates they set before him, while they hurried to blow up the fire and to make coffee. He had rheumy eyes, a long nose, and a thatch of grey hair. The skin sagged in folds over the cavity of his stomach. I thought, 'He looks a proper old

beggar. I bet he asks for something.' Later in the evening he did and I gave him five *riyals*, but by then I had changed my opinion. Bin Kabina said to me, 'He is of the Bait Imani and famous.' I asked, 'What for?' and he answered, 'His generosity.' I said, 'I should not have thought he owned anything to be generous with,' and bin Kabina said, 'He hasn't now. He hasn't got a single camel. He hasn't even got a wife. His son, a fine boy, was killed two years ago by the Dahm. Once he was one of the richest men in the tribe, now he has nothing except a few goats.' I asked, 'What happened to his camels? Did raiders take them, or did they die of disease?' and bin Kabina answered, 'No. His generosity ruined him. No one ever came to his tents but he killed a camel to feed them. By God, he is generous!' I could hear the envy in his voice.

We rode slowly westwards and watered at the deep wells of Sanau, Mughair, and Thamud. There should have been Arabs here, for rain had fallen, and there was good grazing in the broad shallow watercourses which run down towards the Sands across the gravel plains. But the desert was empty and full of fear. Occasionally we saw herdsmen in the distance, hurriedly driving their animals away across the plain. Some of the Rashid would get off their camels and throw up sand into the air, an easily visible signal and the accepted sign of peaceful intentions. They would then ride over to ask the news. Always it was of the Dahm raiders who had passed westwards a few days before. They were in several parties, returning to their homelands in the Yemen with the stock they had captured. Sometimes we were told that they were three hundred strong, and sometimes that they were a hundred; all we knew was that they were many and well armed. Some Manahil women with a herd of goats told us that forty of them had slaughtered eight of their goats for food three days before. They described how the raiders had lain on the sands and

milked the goats into their mouths. These women knew some of the Rashid who were with me and urged us to be careful, but we boasted that we were Rashid, and '*Ba Rashud*!' (the Rashid war-cry) we were not afraid of the Dahm, who were dogs and sons of dogs. The women answered, 'God give you victory.'

It was late one evening. We had watered that day at Hulaiya, and now we were camped on a plain near some acacia bushes, among which our scattered camels were grazing guarded by three men. Half a mile away to the west were limestone ridges, dark against the setting sun. The Rashid were lined up praying, their shadows long upon the desert floor. I was watching them and thinking how this ritual must have remained unchanged in every detail since it was first prescribed by Muhammad, when suddenly one of them said, 'There are men behind that ridge.' They abandoned their prayers. 'The camels? The camels! Get the camels!' Four or five men ran off to help the herdsmen, who had already taken alarm and were hurriedly collecting the grazing camels. Bin Kabina started towards them, but I called to him to remain with me. We had seized our rifles and were lying behind the scattered loads. A score of mounted men swung out from behind the ridge and raced towards our animals. We opened fire. Bin al Kamam, who lay near me, said, 'Shoot in front of them. I don't know who they are.' I got off five rapid shots, firing twenty yards in front of the racing camels, which were crossing in front of us. The dust flew up where the bullets struck the hard sand. Everyone was firing. Bin Kabina's three rounds were all duds. I could see the exasperation on his face. He lay a little in front of me to the right. The raiders sought cover behind a low hill. Our camels were being brought in and couched. 'Who were they?' There was general uncertainty. It was agreed that they were not Dahm or Saar. Their saddles were different. Some said they

were Awamir, perhaps Manahil. No, they were not Mahra; their clothes were wrong. A Manahil who was with us said he would go forward and find out. He got up and walked slowly towards the low hill, silhouetted against the glowing sky. We saw a man stand up and come towards him. They shouted to each other and then went forward and embraced. They were Manahil and a little later they came over and joined us. They told us that they were a pursuit party following the Dahm, had seen our camels and had mistaken us for yet another party of Dahm raiders. They had realized their mistake when they heard us shouting to the camel guards, for our voices were not the voices of the Dahm. We had bought a goat that morning, which we had meant to eat for dinner; instead we feasted the Manahil, who were now our guests.

The Rashid had collected round the fire, anxious to hear the latest news of this raid. Eventually I went to lie down, but it was difficult to sleep, for these excited Arabs were shouting at each other within a few yards of where I lay. They were planning a raid on the Dahm to recover their lost stock. The Rashid and Manahil were allies, and both tribes had suffered much in the last few years from Dahm raiders. Bin al Kamam had explained to me the difficulty of opposing them. In this desert, lack of grazing forced the Bedu to live and move about in widely scattered family groups. Two or three men herding a dozen camels were powerless to resist raiders. All they could do was to escape on the fastest of their animals. They could abandon their women and children, for they knew that the raiders would not harm them. The raiders would pick up a dozen camels here and half a dozen there. They had no chance of making a large haul in one day. They knew that as soon as they had been seen the alarm would spread throughout the desert, and that their enemies, after driving their herds southwards into the more broken country which lay towards the

coast, would collect in pursuit. The longer the raiders delayed and the farther they went eastward looking for unsuspecting families, the more certain it was that they would have to fight before they could get home. But bin al Kamam said that it was difficult for the Rashid and Manahil to muster sufficient men to oppose raiders who were two hundred strong. Some of these raids covered a thousand miles and lasted for two months.

A week later we were in the valley of the Hadhramaut and rode slowly up it to Tarim. I was interested to see this famous valley and these unspolit Arab cities with their curious architecture. We were lavishly entertained, sitting in cushioned ease in spacious guest rooms; we ate well-cooked food and drank water which did not taste of goatskins. My companions, however, were anxious to be gone—they fretted about their camels, which would not eat the lucerne that they were offered. I persuaded them to remain for a few days more, for I was desolate at the thought of parting with them. The privacy for which I had craved while I was with them was there behind a door, but now it was aching loneliness.

NOTES

Arabia Felix: fertile Arabia. Ptolemy was the author of the threefold division of Arabia into *Arabia Petraea* (Stony Arabia), *Arabia Felix* (Fertile Arabia) i.e. Yemen, and *Arabia Deserta* (Desert Arabia).

Bertram, Sidney Thomas: wrote *Arabia Felix* in 1932.

Lawrence, Thomas Edward, 1888—1935: English soldier and author, famous for his activities in arousing and directing a successful rebellion of the Arabs again the Turks during World War 1. *Revolt in the Desert* is an abridged edition of his book *The Seven Pilliars of Wisdom.*

Promised Land: Canaan or Palestine, so called because God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that their children should possess it.
Ophir: country in south Arabia which was the source of the treasure of King Solomon.
Austerity: severity of expression.
Genesis: Greek name for the first book of the Old Testament.
Defer: give way to another person's desires because of respect.
Unkempt: uncombed, rough-looking.
Condescend: be consciously kind to persons in lower position.
Dump: put down without care.
Archaic: no longer current; of very old times.
Reminisce: recall an experience.
Gritty: containing small grains of sand.
Unleavened: (bread) made without yeast.
Importunities: strong and frequent requests.
Improvident: thriftless.
Idiosyncrasy: view, behaviour, peculiar to a person.
Compelling: here, having a strong effect.
Ritual: forms gone through, especially in connection with religious rites; set form or system of rites.
Thoroughbred: animal, especially horse, of good birth, or unmixed blood.
Spew: vomit.
Disconcert: put at a loss by surprise.
Dawdle: be slow; waste time.
Garrulous: talkative.
Soggy: soft.
Relax: rest after work.
Scrub: rub hard with brush, soap, and water.
Eccentricity: strange, not normal behaviour.
Disillusion: make someone see things in true, less pleasing light.
Fret: be unhappy, bad-humoured, irritated.

Frustration: sense of failure.
Susceptibility: feeling.
Equanimity: controlled condition of mind.
Epsom: town in England famous for its mineral waters used as a cathartic.
Consort: be in harmony with, get along with, go with, accompany.
Uncouth: rough, unpolished.
Relay: untired horses, or men, to take the place of tired ones.
Raking stride: (walk with) long steps.
Collapse: breakdown.
Sag: become curved, bag-like, as effect of weight.
Silhouette: picture done in solid black on white; outline of a thing seen against light.
Haul: Amount caught, especially of fish.

ON SAYING 'PLEASE'

ALPHA OF THE PLOUGH

THE young lift-man in a City office who threw a passenger out of his lift the other morning and was fined for the offence was undoubtedly in the wrong. It was a question of 'Please'. The complainant, entering the lift, said, 'Top.' The lift-man demanded, 'Top—please,' and this concession being refused he not only declined to comply with the instruction, but hurled the passenger out of the lift. This, of course, was carrying a comment on manners too far. Discourtesy is not a legal offence, and it does not excuse assault and battery. If a burglar breaks into my house and I knock him down the law will acquit me, and if I am physically assaulted it will permit me to retaliate with reasonable violence. It does this because the burglar and my assailant have broken quite definite commands of the law. But no legal system could attempt to legislate against bad manners, or could sanction the use of violence against something which it does not itself recognize as a legally punishable offence. And whatever our sympathy with the lift-man, we must admit that the law is reasonable. It would never do if we were at liberty to box people's ears because we did not like their behaviour, or the tone of their voices, or the scowl on their faces. Our fists would never be idle, and the gutters of the City would run with blood all day.

I may be as uncivil as I please and the law will protect me against violent retaliation. I may be haughty or boorish and there is no penalty to pay except the penalty of being written down an ill-mannered fellow. The law does not compel me to say 'Please' or to attune my voice to other people's sensibilities any more

than it says that I shall not wax my moustache or dye my hair or wear ringlets down my back. It does not recognize the laceration of our feelings as a case for compensation. There is no allowance for moral and intellectual damages in these matters. This does not mean that the damages are negligible. It is probable that the lift-man was much more acutely hurt by what he regarded as a slur upon his social standing than he would have been if he had had a kick on the shins, for which he could have got legal redress. The pain of a kick on the shins soon passes away, but the pain of wound to our self-respect or our vanity may poison a whole day. I can imagine that lift-man, denied the relief of throwing the author of his wound out of the lift, brooding over the insult by the hour, and visiting it on his wife in the evening as the only way of restoring his equilibrium. For there are few things more catching than bad temper and bad manners. When Sir Anthony Absolute bullied Captain Absolute, the latter went out and bullied his man Fag, whereupon Fag went downstairs and kicked the page-boy. Probably the man who said 'Top' to the lift-man was really only getting his own back on his employer who had not said 'Good morning' to him because he himself had been hen-pecked at breakfast by his wife, to whom the cook had been insolent because the housemaid had 'answered her back'. We infect the world with our ill-humours. Bad manners probably do more to poison the stream of the general life than all the crimes in the calendar. For one wife who gets a black eye from an otherwise good-natured husband there are a hundred who live a life of martyrdom under the shadow of a morose temper. But all the same the law cannot become the guardian of our private manners. No Declaogue could cover the vast area of offences and no court could administer a law which governed our social civilities, our speech, the tilt of our eye-brows and all our moods and manners.

But though we are bound to endorse the verdict against the

lift-man, most people will have a certain sympathy with him. While it is true that there is no law that compels us to say 'Please,' there is a social practice much older and more sacred than any law which enjoins us to be civil. And the first requirement of civility is that we should acknowledge a service. 'Please' and 'Thank you' are the small change with which we pay our way as social beings. They are the little courtesies by which we keep the machine of life oiled and running sweetly. They put our intercourse upon the basis of a friendly co-operation, an easy give-and-take, instead of on the basis of superiors dictating to inferiors. It is a very vulgar mind that would wish to command where he can have the service for asking, and have it with willingness and good-feeling instead of resentment.

I should like to 'feature' in this connection my friend the polite conductor. By this discriminating title I do not intend to suggest a rebuke to conductors generally. On the contrary, I am disposed to think that there are few classes of men who come through the ordeal of a very trying calling better than bus conductors do. Here and there you will meet an unpleasant specimen who regards the passengers as his natural enemies—as creatures whose chief purpose on the bus is to cheat him, and who can only be kept reasonably honest by a loud voice and an aggressive manner. But this type is rare—rarer than it used to be. I fancy the public owes much to the Underground Railway Company, which also runs the buses, for insisting on a certain standard of civility in its servants, and taking care that that standard is observed. In doing this it not only makes things pleasant for the travelling public, but performs an important social service.

It is not, therefore, with any feeling of unfriendliness to conductors as a class that I pay a tribute to a particular member of that class. I first became conscious of his existence one day when I jumped on to a bus and found that I had left home without any money in my pocket. Everyone has had the experi-

ence and knows the feeling, the mixed feeling, which the discovery arouses. You are annoyed because you look like a fool at the best, and like a knave at the worst. You would not be at all surprised if the conductor eyed you coldly as much as to say, 'Yes, I know that stale old trick. Now then, off you get', And even if the conductor is a good fellow and lets you down easily, you are faced with the necessity of going back, and the inconvenience, perhaps, of missing your train or your engagement.

Having searched my pockets in vain for stray coppers, and having found I was utterly penniless, I told the conductor with as honest a face as I could assume that I couldn't pay the fare, and must go back for money, 'Oh, you needn't get off: that's all right, said he'. 'All right,' said I, 'but I haven't a copper on me.' 'Oh, I'll book you through,' he replied. 'Where d'ye want to go?' and he handled his bundle of tickets with the air of a man who was prepared to give me a ticket for anywhere from the Bank to Hong Kong. I said it was very kind of him, and told him where I wanted to go, and as he gave me the ticket I said, 'But where shall I send the fare?' 'Oh, you'll see me some day all right,' he said cheerfully, as he turned to go. And then, luckily, my fingers, still wandering in the corners of my pockets, lighted on a shilling, and the account was squared. But that fact did not lessen the glow of pleasure which so good-natured an action had given me.

A few days after, my most sensitive toe was trampled on rather heavily as I sat reading on the top of a bus. I looked up with some anger and more agony, and saw my friend of the cheerful countenance, 'Sorry, sir,' he said. 'I know these are heavy boots. Got 'em because my own feet get trod on so much, and now I'm treading on other people's. Hope I didn't hurt you, sir.' He had hurt me but he was so nice about it that I assured him he hadn't. After this I began to observe him whenever I boarded his bus, and found a curious pleasure in the

constant good nature of his bearing. He seemed to have an inexhaustible fund of patience and a gift for making his passengers comfortable. I noticed that if it was raining he would run up the stairs to give someone the tip that there was 'room inside'. With old people he was as considerate as a son, and with children as solicitous as a father. He had evidently a peculiarly warm place in his heart for young people, and always indulged in some merry jest with them. If he had a blind man on board it was not enough to set him down safely on the pavement. He would call to Bill in front to wait while he took him across the road or round the corner, or otherwise safely on his way. In short, I found that he irradiated such an atmosphere of good-temper and kindliness that a journey with him was a lesson in natural courtesy and good manners.

What struck me particularly was the ease with which he got through his work. If bad manners are infectious, so also are good manners. If we encounter incivility most of us are apt to become uncivil, but it is an unusually uncouth person who can be disagreeable with sunny people. It is with manners as with the weather. 'Nothing clears up my spirits like a fine day,' said Keats, and a cheerful person descends on even the gloomiest of us with something of the benediction of a fine day. And so it was always fine weather on the polite conductor's bus, and his own civility, his conciliatory address and good-humoured bearing, infected his passengers. In lightening their spirits he lightened his own task. His gaiety was not a wasteful luxury, but a sound investment.

I have missed him from my bus route of late; but I hope that only means that he has carried his sunshine on to another road. It cannot be too widely diffused in a rather drab world. And I make no apologies for writing a panegyric on an unknown bus conductor. If Wordsworth could gather lessons of wisdom from the poor leech-gatherer 'on the lonely moor',

I see no reason why lesser people should not take lessons in conduct from one who shows how a very modest calling may be dignified by good-temper and kindly feeling.

It is a matter of general agreement that the war has had a chilling effect upon those little every-day civilities of behaviour that sweeten the general air. We must get those civilities back if we are to make life kindly and tolerable for each other. We cannot get them back by invoking the law. The policeman is a necessary symbol and the law is a necessary institution for a society that is still somewhat lower than the angels. But the law can only protect us against material attack, Nor will the lift-man's way of meeting moral affornt by physical violence help us to restore the civilities. I suggest to him that he would have had a more subtle and effective revenge if he had treated the gentleman who would not say 'Please' with elaborate politeness. He would have had the victory, not only over the boor, but over himself, and that is the victory that counts. The polite man may lose the material advantage, but he always has the spiritual victory. I commend to the lift-man a story of Chesterfield. In his time the London streets were without the pavements of today, and the man who 'took the wall' had the driest footing. 'I never give the wall to a scoundrel,' said a man who met Chesterfield one day in the street. 'I always do,' said Chesterfield, stepping with a bow into the road. I hope the lift-man will agree that his revenge was much more sweet than if he had flung the fellow into the mud.

NOTES

Assault and battery: violent blow, unlawful personal attack.
Retaliate: repay injury or insult in kind.
Boorish: ill-bred.
Lacerate: wound or hurt one's feelings.

Slur: anything harmful or intended to harm one's feelings.
Sir Anthony Absolute: father of *Captain Absolute.* These are characters in Sheridan's play *The Rivals.*
Morose: gloomy.
Decalogue: the Ten Commandments.
Endorse: support or approve.
Feature: special story or article in a magazine or newspaper.
Stray: odd.
Tip: piece of information.
Solicitous: eager to help or be friendly.
Irradiate: make bright.
Benediction: blessing.

Conciliatory: that which wins one over:
Address: skill or tact in talk or handling matters.
Panegyric: speech or writing praising a person or thing.
Invoke: call upon.
Affront: insult.
Lord Chesterfield, 1694—1773*:* author of a famous series of *Letters* to his son, chiefly regarding the manner in which a gentleman should conduct himself in all affairs of life.

EDUCATION OF A MAN OF TWO WORLDS

CAMARA LAYE, TRANSLATED BY JAMES KIRKUP

I STARTED school very early. I began by attending the Moslem school, and a little later I was enrolled in the French school. Neither my mother nor I had any notion how long I would be a student at the latter: had she guessed the number of years I should be there, I am sure she would have kept me at home. But perhaps my father had guessed already...

Immediately after breakfast my sister and I would start out for school, carrying our exercise-books and note-books in a satchel made of raffia.

On the way we would be joined by school-mates, and the nearer we got to the school buildings the larger our little band would grow. My sister would keep with the girls, and I would walk with the boys. And like all little boys we liked to tease the girls and pull their hair; and the girls gave as good as they got, and used to laugh in our faces. But if we pulled their hair, their reprisals did not stop at calling us names: they would fight back with teeth and nails for all they were worth, scratching and kicking and biting as hard as ever they could, though this did not noticeably diminish our fondness for them. The only one I did not touch was my sister, and in return she did not interfere with my activities either. Fanta, one of her friends, also let me alone, though I can't say I did the same to her.

'Why do you pull my hair?' she asked me one day when we were alone in the school yard.

'Why shouldn't I pull it? You're a girl!'

'But I've never done anything to you!'

'No that's true,' I said.

And for a moment I stopped to think. Until that moment, I had not realized that she was the only girl, apart from my sister, who had never hit me.

'Why don't you hit me?' I said.

'Because!'

'Because? What sort of an answer's that?'

'Even if you were to pull my hair this minute, I would not hit you.'

'All right then, I'm going to pull your hair!'

But what would have been the point in pulling her hair? Boys did that sort of thing only when they were all together. And because I did not carry out my threat she burst out laughing.

'Just you wait till we're going home!' I said. 'It won't do you any harm to wait!'

She laughed and ran away. But when we were going home, again something prevented me from pulling her hair, and from then on I rarely bothered her. My sister was not long in noticing this.

'You don't pull Fanta's hair any more,' she said.

'Why should I pull her hair?' I answered. 'She doesn't hurt me.'

'Do you think I haven't noticed?'

'Then you know why I don't pull her hair.'

'Really?' she asked. 'Is that the only reason?'

What was she getting at? I shrugged my shoulders. It was a lot of little-girl nonsense: they did not know what they were talking about most of the time. All girls were like that.

'Shut up talking about Fanta!' I said. 'You make me tired.'

But she only began shrieking with laughter.

'Listen here,' I said, 'if you don't stop laughing at me...'

She made sure she was well out of my reach, then suddenly started to shout:

'Fanta!...Fanta!...'

'Will you shut up?' I said.

But she just went on louder than ever, and I rushed at her, but she ran away shouting:

'Fanta!...Fanta!...'

I looked all round me to see if I couldn't find a stone to throw at her; but there weren't any. 'I'll pay you back for that,' said I to myself.

Once in school, we went straight to our seats, boys and girls sitting side by side, our quarrels over; and, as soon as we had sat down, we became all ears, and sat absolutely still, so that the teacher used to give his lessons in an impressive silence. I should just like to have seen what would have happened if we had so much as stirred in our seats. Our teacher moved like quicksilver: he never remained long in the same place; he was here, there and everywhere. His flow of talk would have bewildered less attentive pupils. But we were remarkably attentive, and we found it no strain to be so. Young though we were, we all regarded our school work as something deadly serious. Everything we learned was strange and unexpected, it was as if we were learning about life on another planet; and we never grew tired of listening. Even if it had been otherwise, the silence could not have been more absolute under the strict discipline of a master who seemed to be everywhere at once and who would never have given us an opportunity to let our attention wander or to interrupt. But as I have said, an interruption was out of the question: it simply did not occur to us. And so we tried to attract the teacher's attention as little as possible: for we lived in constant dread of being sent out to the blackboard.

This blackboard was our nightmare. Its dark, blank mirror was the exact reflection of the amount of our knowledge. We knew very little, and the little we knew was very shaky: the

slightest thing could upset it. Now if we did not want to be the recipients of several strokes of the cane, we had to go to the blackboard and take the chalk in our hands and pay our debt in kind. Here the tiniest detail was of the utmost importance: the wretched blackboard magnified every mistake. If we made one of our downward strokes not exactly of the same height as the others, we were required either to do an extra lesson on Sunday, or we had to go to the teacher during break, and receive in the class that was always known as the infants', an unforgettable beating on our bare backsides. Irregular downward strokes used to horrify our teacher: he would examine our exercise-books under a magnifying-glass, and for each irregularity he discovered we got a stroke. I remember him well, a man like quicksilver; and he wielded his stick with joyous abandon!

This was how things were in the lower classes. In the upper school, there were not so many beatings, but other kinds of punishment, hardly more pleasant, took their place. Indeed, I experienced a great variety of punishments at that school: only my own discomfort lacked variety. Our love of knowledge had to be ineradicable to survive such ordeals.

II

The easiest form of punishment, for second-year pupils, was sweeping the school yard. Not until then did we realize how vast it was, nor how many guava trees were planted in it. We could have sworn that the guava trees had been put there simply to litter the ground with their leaves, for we certainly never were allowed to taste any of the fruit. In the third and fourth years our punishment was to work in the kitchen-garden; it has since struck me that no cheaper form of labour could have been found. In our last two years, however, while we

were studying for our proficiency certificate, the school authorities had such confidence in us—a confidence that we would gladly have done without—that we were entrusted with the herd of cattle which belonged to the school.

This task was no sinecure! You wouldn't have found a less easily managed herd for miles around. If a farmer had a vicious cow, it would be sure to end up in our herd. There was good reason for this: the farmer obviously would only be too anxious to get rid of his awkward beast, and naturally had to sell it at a loss. The school authorities were only too glad to make a profit, and did so. But it was pure stinginess. And so our school owned the most peculiar, the most heterogeneous, and the most complete collection of bad-tempered old beasts in existence. If we shouted to them to go to the right, they would of course go to the left.

These beasts used to gallop madly about the bush, as they were constantly plagued by a swarm of flies, and we used to have to chase after them for incredible distances. Curiously enough, they were always more inclined to wander off on their own, or start fighting among themselves, then to forage for food. But this picturesque behaviour was no pleasure to us. We knew that on our return the fulness of their bellies would be carefully inspected to find out how well they had pastured; and woe betide us should the bellies of these raw-boned creatures appear inadequately filled!

But woe betide us indeed, if a single head was missing from this devil's own herd! At night, we would run till we were breathless, trying to herd them together; we would lay about them with a big stick. Which was not much good, I fear, and certainly did not improve the disposition of these fantastic beasts. Then we would lead them to water and make them drink vast quantities to make up for the lack of solid stuff in their bellies. We would come back, worn, out, with the entire

herd. It goes without saying that we would not have dared to come back to the school without having mustered the complete herd. I shudder to think of what one missing head would have cost us!

Such were the dealings we had with our teachers, the black side of our school life: and naturally we could hardly wait for our schooling to be over, for the day when we should receive our famous proficiency certificates that would proclaim to the world that we were 'educated'. Yet when I think of what the pupils in the top form made us suffer, all that I have said about the 'lack' side of our school life seems to pale into insignificance.

III

Those older students—I refuse to call them school-fellows—who were older and stronger than we were, and less strictly supervised, persecuted us in every conceivable way. They gave themselves superior airs and had an inflated sense of their own importance—they probably felt that they would never enjoy such much power again—and perhaps they were trying to get a little of their own back for the rough handling they themselves had experienced when they were younger: excessively harsh treatment is perhaps not quite the best method of inculcating good behaviour.

I still remember—my hands and my finger-tips still remember!—what used to lie in store for us on our return to school from the holidays. The guava trees in the school yard would be in full leaf again, and the old leaves would be strewn around in scattered heaps. In places there were even more than just heaps of them: it would be like a muddy sea of leaves.

'Get that all swept up!' the headmaster would tell us. 'I want the whole place cleaned up, at once!'

'At once!' There was enough work there, damned hard work,

too, to last us for over a week. Especially since the only tools with which we were provided were our hands, our fingers, our nails.

'Now see that it's properly done, and be quick about it,' the headmaster would say to the older pupils, 'or you'll have to answer for it!'

So at an order from the older boys we would all line up like peasants about to reap or glean a field, and we would set to work like members of a chain-gang. In the school yard itself, it wasn't too bad: the guava trees were fairly well spaced: but there was one part where the closely planted trees grew in a hopeless tangle of leaves and branches. The sun could not penetrate here, and the acrid stench of decay lingered in the undergrowth even at the height of summer.

If the work was not going as quickly as the headmaster expected, the big boys, instead of giving us a helping hand, used to find it simpler to whip us with branches pulled from the trees. Now guava wood is regrettably flexible; skilfully handled, the springy switches used to whistle piercingly, and fall like flails of fire on our backsides. Our flesh stung and smarted, while tears of anguish sprang from our eyes and splashed on the rotting leaves at our feet.

In order to avoid these blows, we used to bribe our tyrants with the succulent cakes of Indian corn, the *couscous* made of meat or fish which we used to bring for our midday meal. And if we happened to have any money on us, the coins changed hands at once. If we did not do this, if we were afraid of going home with an empty stomach or an empty purse, the blows were redoubled. They were administered with such furious generosity and with such diabolical gusto that even a deaf mute would have gathered that we were being flogged not so much to spur us on to work, but rather to lash us into a state of submissiveness in which we would be only too glad to give up our food

and money.

Occasionally, one of us, worn out by such calculated cruelty, would have the courage to complain to the headmaster. He would of course be very angry, but the punishment he inflicted on the older boys was always negligible—nothing compared to what they had done to us. And the fact is that however much we complained, our situation did not improve in the slightest. Perhaps we should have let our parents know what was going on, but somehow we never dreamed of doing so; I don't know whether it was loyalty or pride that kept us silent, but I can see now that we were foolish to keep quiet about it, for such beatings were utterly foreign to our nature, to the most fundamental and secret principles of our character, and completely at variance with our passion for independence and equality.

But one day, one of my little school-mates, Kouyaté Karamoko, who had just been brutally assaulted, declared openly that he had had enough of his sort of thing. Kouyaté was extremely small and thin, so small and thin that we used to tell him jokingly that he couldn't have any stomach, or at least one only as big as a bird's gizzard. Moreover, Kouyaté did nothing to develop his little gizzard or whatever it was that served him for a stomach: he only liked sour, acid things, and citrus fruits: at lunch break, he wasn't happy unless he could exchange his *couscous* for guavas, oranges, or lemons. But if Kouyaté was to be deprived even of fruit, it was obvious that his gizzard or whatever it was would finally become even smaller: like the stomach of a grasshopper, perhaps. Now the older boys' insistent demands forced Kouyaté into periods of rigorous fasting. That day, his frustrated passion for sour fruit and also the weals on his buttocks, turned Kouyaté into a rebel.

'Yes, I've had enough of it!' he said to me, sniffing through his tears. 'Do you hear? I've had enough! I'm going to tell my

father.'

'You keep quiet,' I said. 'Telling your father won't do us any good.'

'Do you really believe that?'

'Don't forget, the big boys. . .'

But he would not let me finish.

'I'm going to tell him!' he cried.

'Hush, don't shout like that!'

We were working in the same row, and he was the nearest to me in it: I was afraid that this outburst would bring another flogging from the big boys.

'You know what sort of a man my father is, don't you?' he said.

'Yes, of course.'

Kouyaté's father was one of the most venerated praise-singers of the district. He was an educated man, welcome everywhere, though he no longer practised his art; he was a kind of emeritus praise-singer, and very proud of his position.

'But your father's an old man now,' I said.

'He's tough!' said Kouyaté proudly.

He drew his thin little body up to its full height.

'You make me laugh sometimes!' I said.

Whereupon he began to whimper again.

'Oh, well, do as you like!' I told him.

The next day, Kouyaté had no sooner entered the school yard than he went over to Himourana, the big boy who had thrashed him so mercilessly the day before.

'My father is most anxious to meet the boy who has been kindest to me in the top class, and I thought of you at once. Can you come and share our dinner this evening?'

'You bet I can!' answered Himonourana, who was as stupid as he was brutal, and probably as greedy as he was stupid.

That evening, at the appointed time, this big bully Himourana

showed up at Kouyaté's concession. Now this concession is one of the best-guarded ones in Kouroussa: it has only one gate, and the fence around it, instead of being made of woven reeds, is constructed of mud bricks, with pieces of broken glass bottles fixed to the top. It would be entered and left only with the permission of the master of the house. Kouyaté's father came in person to open the gate, and when Himourana was inside, he carefully bolted it.

'Would you care to sit down in the courtyard?' he said. 'Our whole family is expecting you.'

Himourana took a quick look at the pots and pans, which seemed to give ample promise of a succulent repast, and sat down with the rest of the family, eager for the compliments that he felt sure were about to be addressed to him. But Kouyaté got up and pointed at him.

'My father,' he said, 'this is the big boy who never stops beating me, and takes my food and my money!'

'Well, well,' said Kouyaté's father, 'that's not a nice thing to say about him. Are you sure you're telling me the truth?'

'I swear by Allah!' said Kouyaté.

'So it must be the truth,' said his father.

And he turned towards Himourana.

'Well, young man, it's time you gave an explanation of your strange behaviour. Have you anything to say in your defence? Be quick: I haven't much time to spare, but I don't want to be uncharitable.'

It was as if a thunderbolt had dropped at Himourana's feet—he couldn't have been more dumbfounded: he had obviously not heard a word of what Kouyaté's father had said to him. As soon as he had recovered a little from his surprise, his one thought was to get away; this was obviously his best course, but it needed a stupid bully like Himourana to imagine he could escape from such a well-guarded concession. He had not run

more than a few steps before he was caught.

'Now, sir,' said Kouyaté's father, 'listen carefully to what I have to say to you; get this into your head, once and for all: I do not send my son to school to learn how to become the slave of boys like you!'

And thereupon Himourana felt himself lifted in the air by his feet and arms—everything had been carefully planned—and held in a convenient position, while, despite his screams, Kouyaté's father laid into him, belabouring his bare backside with his cattlewhip. Then he was allowed to run away, shame faced, with his tail on fire, like a scalded cat.

IV

Next day, the story of Himourana's beating spread like wildfire. It created a real scandal. Nothing like that had ever happened before, so that we found it hard to realize that it had actually taken place, although we all felt we had been avenged by the action taken by Kouyaté's father. The big boys of the two top classes held a meeting and decided that Kouyaté as well as his sister Mariama would be sent to Coventry, and they ordered all of us to send them to Conventry too; but they did not dare lay a finger on Kouyaté or his sister, and at this even the stupidest among us became aware that they were afraid: we suddenly felt that an era had ended and we prepared to breathe the air of liberty again.

At midday, I went up to Kouyaté, having decided to defy the big boys' orders.

'Careful,' said Kouyaté; 'they might beat you for this.'

'I'm not afraid of them!' I said.

I had some oranges for my midday meal, and I gave them to him.

'Thank you,' he said, 'but do go away: I'm afraid they'll

beat you.'

I had no no time to reply. I could see several of the big boys coming towards us, and I hesitated an instant, uncertain whether to stand up to them or to run away. I decided to stand up to them. Had I not already begun to do so? But suddenly I felt my head reeling under their blows, and I took to my heels. I did not stop until I had reached the edge of the school yard, I began to cry more with rage then with pain. When I had pulled myself together a little, I saw Fanta sitting besides me.

'What do you want?' I said.

'I've brought you a wheat cake,' she replied.

I took it and ate it almost without realizing what I was doing, though Fanta's mother was renowned as the best cake-maker in the district. I got up and drank some water and washed my face. Then I came back and sat down again.

'I don't like you to come and sit beside me when I'm crying,' I said.

"Where you crying?' she asked. 'I didn't notice.'

I looked at her. She was lying. Why was she lying? Obviously to spare my pride: I smiled at her.

'Do you want another wheat cake?' she asked.

'No,' I replied. 'I couldn't eat another one: I feel sick with anger. Don't you?'

'Yes,' she said.

There was suddenly tears in her eyes.

'Oh, I hate them!' I said. 'You can't imagine how much I hate them! Listen: I'm going to leave this school. I'm going to try and grow up fast, then I'll come back, and for every beating I've received I'll pay them back a hundredfold! Yes,' I said, 'that's what I'll do!'

She stopped crying, and looked up admiringly at me.

That evening, I went and spoke to my father under the veranda.

'Father,' I said, 'I can't go to school any more.'

'What?' said my father.

'No,' I said, 'I can't go back.'

But by this time the scandal had had time to go the rounds of all the concessions in Kouroussa.

'What's going on in that school?' my father asked.

'I'm afraid of the big boys,' I said.

'I thought you weren't afraid of anyone?'

'I am: I'm afraid of the big boys.'

'What have they been doing to you?'

'They take everything I've got! They take my money and they take my food.'

'Do they, now?' said my father. 'And do they beat you?'

'Do they beat me!' I said bitterly.

'Very well, then, I'll come and have a word with those bullies tomorrow. Will that do?'

'Yes, Father.'

V

The next morning my father and his apprentices came with me to the school gate. Each time a big boy approached, my father said to me:

'Is that one of them?'

I always said no, even though many of them *had* whipped me and robbed me; I was waiting for my most persistent attacker to appear. When I saw him coming: I said in a loud voice:

'That's the one who beats me the most!'

At once the apprentices threw themselves upon him and stripped him naked, and began to beat him so hard that my father had in the end to restrain them. Then my father said to the big boy who stood there with a frightened look in his eyes:

'I shall have a word with the headmaster about you. I should

like to know if the pupils in the top forms of this school are here solely for the purpose of beating up the younger boys and stealing their money.'

That day, there was no longer any question of sending Kouyaté and his sister to Coventry: they mingled with us freely, and none of the big boys dared raise his voice in protest or lift a finger to us. Was a new era beginning? It felt like it. The big boys kept to themselves. And as we kept well away from them and were more numerous than they were, it almost looked as if it was the big boys who had been sent to Coventry by us; they looked embarrassed. Indeed, they were in a rather unpleasant situation: their parents had not known about their tyrannical cruelty; if they got to know about it, and there was now every likelihood that the whole thing would become public, the big boys would have to endure all kinds of scoldings and punishments.

In the afternoon, at the end of school, my father came as he had said he would. The headmaster was in the school yard, surrounded by teachers. My father went up to him, and, without even stopping to wish him good day, said:

'Do you know what's been going on in this school?'

'Everything is going as it should,' said the headmaster.

'It is, is it?' said my father. 'Are you not aware of the fact that the big boys beat the little ones, that they steal their money and take their food? Are you blind, or do you not wish to see what's going on?'

'I'll thank you to mind your own business!' said the headmaster.

'And is this not my own business?' said my father. 'Is it none of my business when my own son is being treated like a slave in your school?'

'Certainly not.'

'You should not have said that,' said my father.

And he went right up to the headmaster.

'Do you think you'll beat me up as your apprentices beat up one of my pupils this morning?' cried the headmaster.

And he hit out with his fists; but although he was stronger, he was fat, and his fat impeded rather than helped him; and my father, who was thin, but active and supple, had no difficulty in dodging his blows and setting about him in no uncertain fashion. My father got him down on the ground and was punching him for all he was worth: I don't know what might have happened if the teachers had not dragged him off.

The headmaster was feeling his jaw and didn't say a word. My father dusted himself down, then took me by the hand. He went out of the school yard without a word to anyone, and I marched proudly back to our concession with him. But towards evening, when I went for a walk in the town, I could hear folks saying as I passed by:

'Look! That's the schoolboy whose father went and beat up the headmaster in his own school yard!'

And suddenly I didn't feel nearly so proud. This scandal was not the same sort of thing as Kouyaté's father had started. It had taken place in front of the teachers and the pupils, and the headmaster himself had been the victim. No, this wasn't at all the same sort of thing; and I imagined that now I would be expelled. I ran back to our concession and said to my father:

'Why did you beat him? Now they won't want me back at school, I know.'

'I thought you said that you didn't want to go back to school?' said my father.

And he laughed out loud.

'But, Father, it's no laughing matter!' I said.

'You go to sleep and forget all about it, you little silly. If we don't hear the put-put of a certain motor bicycle outside

the gate of the concession tomorrow, I shall complain to the district supervisor.'

But my father did not need to make this complaint, and I was not expelled, for, the next day, a little before nightfall, the headmaster's motor bicycle chugged up to the gate of our concession. The headmaster came in, and everybody, my father included, went to meet him, and greeted him amiably with:

'Good evening sir.'

He offered the headmaster a chair, and my father and he sat down, while, at a sign from my father, the rest of us withdrew. The interview seemed to be a very cordial one; indeed it must have been, for from then on, my sister and I took part in no more forced labour at school.

Yet the scandal could not be hushed up entirely. A few months later the headmaster was forced to resign owing to a petition signed by all of the parents. But meanwhile the rumour got around that he was using some of the bigger lads as houseboys for the convenience of his wives. These pupils had been boarded with him so that they might enjoy special attention, and their board had been paid for with cattle. I don't know all the ins and outs of the affair; I only know that this was the last straw that broke the camel's back, and that we were never again bullied by the big boys.

VI

I was fifteen when I left home for Conakry, where I was going to pursue a course of technical studies at the Ecole Georges-Poiret, now known as the Technical College.

After the last day of the holdays, my Uncle Mamadou took me to my new school.

'Work hard now,' he said, 'and the Lord will keep you. You can give me your first impression on Sunday.'

In the courtyard, where I was given my first instructions, and in the dormitory where I went to arrange my clothes, I found pupils who like myself had come from Upper Guinea; we became acquainted, and I did not feel so lonely. A little later, we went into our classrooms. We were all of us, new and old pupils, assembled in the same vast room. I was prepared to take everything in with both ears, hoping to profit from some part of the teaching given to the older boys, at the same time paying attention to whatever the younger ones were taught; but almost at once I saw that not much distinction was made between the elder and the younger boys. It seemed rather as if we were getting ready to learn the lessons that had twice or even three times already been crammed into the older boys since their first year. 'Well, we'll see,' I said to myself. But nevertheless I was perturbed: such a proceeding did not seem to me to augur well.

To start with, a very simple text was dictated to us. When the teacher marked the copies, I was surprised that they could contain so many faults. It was, as I have said, a very simple text, without pitfalls, and one which any of my companions in Kouroussa would have had no difficulty with. Afterwards we were given a problem to solve, and only two of us found the right answer. I was stunned: was this the school where I was to rise to the highest grade? It seemed to me rather as if I was going back several years, that I was still sitting in one of the infants' classes at Kouroussa. And that is exactly how it was: the whole week went by without my having learnt a thing. On the Sunday, I complained bitterly to my uncle:

'But I've learnt nothing, Uncle! I already know by heart all the things they taught us. Is it really worth while going to this school? I might as well go back to Kouroussa at once!'

'No', said my uncle, 'wait a little.'

'There's nothing to wait for. I could see at once that there was

nothing worth waiting for.'

'Come, do not be so impatient. Are you always as impatient as this? The school where you are now is perhaps of too low a grade in general subjects, but it can give you practical training which you will find nowhere else. Haven't you been in the workshops?'

I showed him my hands: they were covered with scratches and the tips of my fingers burned.

'But I do not want to be a workman,' I said.

'Why not?'

'I do not want to be despised.'

In the general view, there was a tremendous difference between the pupils at our school and those at the Camille-Guy college. We were looked upon simply as future working men; certainly we would never be skilled men, but we might at the very most become foremen; unlike the pupils at the Camille-Guy, we would never be able to enter the colleges in Dakar.

'Listen to me carefully,' said my uncle. 'All the pupils who come from Kouroussa hold the Technical School in scorn, they all dream of a position as a clerk. Is that the sort of career you want? Clerks are ten a penny. If you really want that sort of career, change your school. But remember this: if I were twenty years younger, if I still had my schooling to do, I would not go to the Ecole Normale; no, I would learn a good trade in a technical school. A good trade would have taken me a lot further.'

'But I might as well never have left my father's forge,' I said.

'Maybe not. But, tell me, have you never had any ambition to do better than that?'

Now I *was* ambitious. But I would never realize my ambitions by becoming a manual worker; I had no more respect than most people for such workers.

'But who is speaking of manual work?' said my uncle. 'A technician is not necessarily a manual worker, and in any case,

there are other things in his line of work: he is a man who has others under him and who can turn his hand to anything should the need arise. Now men who are in charge of business do not always know how to turn their hand to anything, and that is where you will score. Believe me, stay where you are. And I'm going to tell you something you don't know: your school is about to be reorganized. You will shortly see great changes there, and the general standard of education will not be inferior to that at the Camille-Guy college.'

Did my uncle's arguments finally convince me? Not altogether perhaps. But my Uncle Sékou and even my aunts added their advice to his, and so I stayed at the technical school.

For four days out of the six, I used to work in the workshops, filing bits of iron or planing boards under the direction of a monitor. It was apparently easy and not uninteresting work; but it was not as easy as it appeared at first sight, because first of all the lack of practice, and secondly the long hours we spent standing in front of the benches, all helped to make it very boring. I don't know how it was—was it through having to stand so much? was it some kind of inflammation set up by wooden and metal splinters?—my feet began to swell and an ulcer developed on them. I believe that at Kouroussa such a thing would not have been malignant; I think it would not even have happened; but here, in this burning, moisture-laden heat, in this climate that my body had not had time to adapt itself to, the ulcer rapidly gained ground. I was sent to hospital.

My spirits suddenly dropped. The more than spartan fare which was given us in this otherwise magnificent hospital was not really intended to raise the spirits. But as soon as my aunts learnt what had happened to me, they brought my meals each day; my uncle visited me too, and kept me company. Without them, I should have been really miserable, really lonely, in that city whose ways were foreign to me, whose

climate was hostile, and whose dialect I could barely follow. All around me, only Soussou was spoken; and I am a Malinke; apart from French, the only language I speak is Malinke.

Then I began to think it was silly to lie there twiddling my thumbs, breathing sicky air, sweating night and day: I began to think it was even sillier not to be at school, to have to swelter in such a suffocating atmosphere, and in such useless immobility. What was I doing, if not wasting my time? The ulcer was not getting any better. It was not getting any worse, but it was not getting any better either: it just stayed where it was.

The school year passed slowly, very slowly; indeed it seemed endless to me, as endless as the interminable rains that beat for days, sometimes for weeks, on the corrugated iron roofs; as endless as my interminable sickness. Then, by a strange coincidence which I cannot explain, the ending of the scholastic year coincided with my return to health. But it was not before time: I was choking, bubbling over with impatience...I set off for Kouroussa again, as if for a promised land.

When, in October, after the holidays, I returned to Conakry, the reorganization which my uncle had talked about was in full swing: the school had changed completely. New classrooms had been made, a new head had been appointed, and teachers had come from France. I was soon receiving an irreproachable technical education and teaching in general subjects which was sufficiently advanced. I no longer envied the pupils of the Camille-Guy; I was receiving the same education as they received, and in addition a technical and practical training which they did not have. The older pupils had gone: the Conakry-Niger railway had engaged them all. And so everything began again, for the first-year pupils onwards. My Uncle Manadou had not been mistaken and he had not deceived me. I was learning frenziedly everything that came my way, and each term my name was on the list of honour.

Reprisals: injuries done for injury received.
Shrug the shoulders: draw up the shoulders to express doubt, indifference, or contempt.
Nightmare: frightening dream; any experience that causes excessive fear.
Abandon: yield oneself completely to one's feelings or desires.
Ordeal: trial, any difficulty or trying experience.
Ineradicable: too firmly fixed to be rooted out or done away with.
Sinecure: position for which one gets payment without having to do any work.
Heterogeneous: varied, dissimilar.
Forage: go looking for food.
Betide: come about, happen.
Muster: gather together.
Inculcate: urge, impress facts, habits, ideas, etc.
Chain gang: gang of prisoners chained together, as when working.
Acid: sharp, stinging, bitter.
Stench: offensive smell, stink.
Flexible: able to bend without breaking.
Smart: cause sharp, stinging pain.
Anguish: great mental or physical pain.
Succulent: full of juice.
Diabolical: devilish.
Gusto: keen enjoyment, relish.
Weal: ridge raised on the skin, as by a blow.
Emeritus: retired from active service, usually on account of old age.
Repast: food or drink for a meal.
Dumbfound: make speechless with surprise.

Scald: burn with hot liquids or steam.

Send to Coventry: refuse to speak to a person or deal with him or her socially.

Apprentice: learner or beginner.

Embarrass: cause to feel confused and ill at ease.

Impede: hinder, obstruct.

Dodge: avoid.

Amicably: in a friendly manner.

Cordial: friendly, warm.

Ecole: school.

Stun: make senseless by a blow.

Malignant: very dangerous.

Spartan fare: rough food.

Twiddle one's thumbs: do nothing, be idle.

Swelter: perspire, be oppressed with great heat.

Sticky: humid.

Immobility: motionlessness.

Irreproachable: faultless, perfect.

Frenziedly: madly, most eagerly.

With reference to the story 'Education of a man of two worlds' state in your own words the following: what do you think was the most interesting feature of the scholastic career of young students going to school (b), what were the methods used by the teacher of that school. While imparting education to the young students also state whether you would like such a system of instruction for yourself. In either case support your answer by arguments.

Infer mean to reason out.

GALILEO AND SCIENTIFIC METHOD

BERTRAND RUSSELL

SCIENTIFIC method, although in its more refined forms it may seem complicated, is in essence remarkably simple. It consists in observing such facts as will enable the observer to discover general laws governing facts of the kind in question. The two stages, first of observation, and second of inference to a law, are both essential, and each is susceptible of almost indefinite refinement; but in essence the first man who said 'fire burns' was employing scientific method, at any rate if he had allowed himself to be burnt several times. This man had already passed through the two stages of observation and generalization. He had not, however, what scientific technique demands—a careful choice of significant facts on the one hand, and, on the other hand various means of arriving at laws otherwise than by mere generalization. The man who says 'unsupported bodies in air fall' has merely generalized, and is liable to be refuted by balloons, butterflies, and aeroplanes; whereas the man who understands the theory of falling bodies knows also why certain exceptional bodies do not fall.

Scientific method, simple as it is in essence, has been acquired only with great difficulty, and is still employed only by a minority, who themselves confine its employment to a minority of the questions upon which they have opinions. If you number among your acquaintances some eminent man of science, accustomed to the minutest quantitative precision in his experiments and the most abstruse skill in his inference from them, you will be able to make him the subject of a little experiment which is likely to be by no means unilluminating. If you tackle

him on party politics, theology, income-tax, house-agents, the bumptiousness of the working-classes, and other topics of a like nature, you are pretty sure, before long, to provoke an explosion and to hear him expressing wholly untested opinions with a dogmatism which he would never display in regard to the well-founded results of his laboratory experiments.

As this illustration shows, the scientific attitude is in some degree unnatural to man; the majority of our opinions are wish-fulfilments, like dreams in the Freudian theory. The mind of the most rational among us may be compared to a stormy ocean of passionate convictions based upon desire, upon which float perilously a few tiny boats carrying a cargo of scientifically tested beliefs. Nor is this to be altogether deplored: life has to be lived, and there is no time to test rationally all the beliefs by which our conduct is regulated. Without a certain wholesome rashness, no one could long survive. Scientific method, therefore, must, in its very nature, be confined to the more solemn and official of our opinions. A medical man who gives advice on diet should give it after full consideration of all that science has to say on the matter, but the man who follows his advice cannot stop to verify it, and is obliged to rely, therefore, not upon science, but upon his belief that his medical adviser is scientific. A community impregnated with science is one in which the recognized experts have arrived at their opinions by scientific methods, but it is impossible for the ordinary citizen to repeat the work of the experts for himself. There is, in the modern world, a great body of well-attested knowledge on all kinds of subjects, which the ordinary man accepts on authority without any need for hesitation; but as soon as any strong passion intervenes to warp the expert's judgment he becomes unreliable, whatever scientific equipment he may possess. The views of medical men on pregnancy, child-birth, and lactation were until fairly recently impregnated with sadism. It required, for

example, more evidence to persuade them that anaesthetics may be used in child-birth than it would have required to persuade them of the opposite. Anyone who desires an hour's amusement may be advised to look up the tergiversations of eminent craniologists in their attempts to prove from brain measurements that women are stupider than men.[1]

It is not, however, the lapses of scientific men that concern us when we are trying to describe scientific method. A scientific opinion is one which there is some reason to believe true; an unscientific opinion is one which is held for some reason other than its probable truth. Our age is distinguished from all ages before the seventeenth century by the fact that some of our opinions are scientific in the above sense. I except bare matters of fact, since generality in a greater or less degree is an essential characteristic of science, and since men (with the exception of a few mystics) have never been able wholly to deny the obvious facts of their everyday existence.

The Greeks, eminent as they were in almost every department of human activity, did surprisingly little for the creation of science. The great intellectual achievement of the Greeks was geometry, which they believed to be an *a priori* study proceeding from self-evident premises, and not requiring experimental verification. The Greek genius was deductive rather than inductive, and was therefore at home in mathematics. In the ages that followed, Greek mathematics were nearly forgotten, while other products of the Greek passion for deduction survived and flourished, notably theology and law. The Greeks observed the world as poets rather than as men of science, partly, I think, because all manual activity was ungentlemanly, so that any study which required experiment seemed a little vulgar. Perhaps it would be fanciful to connect with this prejudice the fact that the department in which the Greeks were

1. See Havelock Ellis, *Man and Woman* 6th edition, pp. 199 ff.

most scientific was astronomy, which deals with bodies that only can be seen and not touched.

However that may be, it is certainly remarkable how much the Greeks discovered in astronomy. They early decided that the earth is round, and some of them arrived at the Copernican theory that it is the earth's rotation, and not the revolution of the heavens, that causes the apparent diurnal motion of the sun and stars. Archimedes, writing to King Gelon of Syracuse, says: 'Aristarchus of Samos brought out a book consisting of some hypotheses of which the premises lead to the conclusion that the universe is many times greater than that now so called. His hypotheses are that the fixed stars and the sun remain unmoved, that the earth revolves about the sun in the circumference of a circle, the sun lying in the centre of the orbit.' Thus the Greeks discovered not only the diurnal rotation of the earth, but also its annual revolution about the sun. It was the discovery that a Greek had held this opinion which gave Copernicus courage to revive it. In the days of the Renaissance, when Copernicus lived, it was held that any opinion which had been entertained by an ancient might be true, but an opinion which no ancient had entertained could not deserve respect. I doubt whether Copernicus would ever have become a Copernican but for Aristarchus, whose opinion had been forgotten until the revival of classical learning.

The Greeks also discovered perfectly valid methods of measuring the circumference of the earth. Eratosthenes the Geographer estimated it at 250,000 stadia (about 24,662 miles), which is by no means far from the truth.

The most scientific of the Greeks was Archimedes (257-212 B.C.). Like Leonardo da Vinci in a later period, he recommended himself to a prince on the ground of his skill in the arts of war, and like Leonardo he was granted permission to add to human knowledge on condition that he subtracted from

human life. His activities in this respect were, however, more distinguished than those of Leonardo, since he invented the most amazing mechanical contrivances for defending the city of Syracuse against the Romans, and was finally killed by a Roman soldier when that city was captured. He is said to have been so absorbed in a mathematical problem that he did not notice the Romans coming. Plutarch is very apologetic on the subject of the mechanical inventions of Archimedes, which he feels to have been hardly worthy of a gentleman; but he considers him excusable on the ground that he was helping his cousin the king at a time of dire peril.

Archimedes showed great genius in mathematics and extraordinary skill in the invention of mechanical contrivances, but his contributions to science, remarkable as they are, still display the deductive attitude of the Greeks, which made the experimental method scarcely possible for them. His work on Statics is famous, and justly so, but it proceeds from axioms like Euclid's geometry, and the axioms are supposed to be self-evident, not the result of experiment. His book *On Floating Bodies* is the one which according to tradition resulted from the problem of King Hiero's crown, which was suspected of being not made of pure gold. This problem, as everyone knows, Archimedes is supposed to have solved while in his bath. At any rate, the method which he proposes in his book for such cases is a perfectly valid one, and although the book proceeds from postulates by a method of deduction, one cannot but suppose that he arrived at the postulates experimentally. This is, perhaps, the most nearly scientific (in the modern sense) of the works of Archimedes. Soon after his time, however, such feeling as the Greeks had had for the scientific investigation of natural phenomena decayed, and though pure mathematics continued to flourish down to the capture of Alexandria by the Mohammedans, there were hardly any further advances in

natural science, and the best that had been done, such as the theory of Aristarchus, was forgotten.

The Arabs were more experimental than the Greeks, especially in chemistry. They hoped to transmute base metals into gold, to discover the philosopher's stone, and to concoct the elixir of life. Partly on this account chemical investigations were viewed with favour. Throughout the Dark Ages it was mainly by the Arabs that the tradition of civilization was carried on, and it was largely from them that Christians such as Roger Bacon acquired whatever scientific knowledge the later Middle Ages possessed. The Arabs, however, had a defect which was the opposite of that of the Greeks: they sought detached facts rather than general principles, and had not the power of inferring general laws from the facts which they discovered.

In Europe, when the scholastic system first began to give way before the Renaissance, there came to be, for a time, a dislike of all generalizations and all systems. Montaigne illustrates this tendency. He likes queer facts, particularly if they disprove something. He has no desire to make his opinions systematic and coherent. Rabelais also, with his motto: '*Fais ce que voudras*,' is as averse from intellectual as from other fetters. The Renaissance rejoiced in the recovered liberty of speculation, and was not anxious to lose this liberty even in the interests of truth. Of the typical figures of the Renaissance far the most scientific was Leonardo, whose note-books are fascinating and contain many brilliant anticipations of later discoveries, but he brought almost nothing to fruition, and remained without effect upon his scientific successors.

Scientific method, as we understand it, comes into the world full-fledged with Galileo (1564-1642), and, to a somewhat lesser degree, in his contemporary, Kepler (1571-1630). Kepler is known to fame through his three laws: he first discovered that the planets move round the sun in ellipses, not in circles. To

the modern mind there is nothing astonishing in the fact that the earth's orbit is an ellipse, but to minds trained on antiquity anything except a circle, or some complication of circles, seemed almost incredible for a heavenly body. To the Greeks the planets were divine, and must therefore move in perfect curves. Circles and epicycles did not offend their aesthetic susceptibilities, but a crooked, skew orbit such as the earth's actually is would have shocked them deeply. Unprejudiced observation without regard to aesthetic prejudices required therefore, at that time, a rare intensity of scientific ardour. It was Kepler and Galileo who established the fact that the earth and the other planets go round the sun. This had been asserted by Copernicus, and, as we have seen, by certain Greeks, but they had not succeeded in giving proofs. Copernicus, indeed, had no serious arguments to advance in favour of his view. It would be doing Kepler more than justice to suggest that in adopting the Copernican hypothesis he was acting on purely scientific motives. It appears that, at any rate in youth, he was addicted to sun-worship, and thought the centre of the universe the only place worthy of so great a deity. None but scientific motives, however, could have led him to the discovery that the planetary orbits are ellipses and not circles.

He, and still more Galileo, possessed the scientific method in its completeness. While much more is known than was known in their day, nothing essential has been added to method. They proceeded from observation of particular facts to the establishment of exact quantitative laws, by means of which future particular facts could be predicted. They shocked their contemporaries profoundly, partly because their conclusions were inherently shocking to the beliefs of that age, but partly also because the belief in authority had enabled learned men to confine their researches to libraries, and the professors were pained at the suggestion that it might be necessary to look at

the world in order to know what it is like.

Galileo, it must be confessed, was something of a *gamin*. When still very young he became Professor of Mathematics at Pisa, but as the salary was only 7½d. a day, he does not seem to have thought that a very dignified bearing could be expected of him. He began by writing a treatise against the wearing of cap and gown in the University, which may perhaps have been popular with undergraduates, but was viewed with grave disfavour by his fellow-professors. He would amuse himself by arranging occasions which would make his colleagues look silly. They asserted, for example, on the basis of Aristotle's Physics, that a body weighing ten pounds would fall through a given distance in one-tenth of the time that would be taken by a body weighing one pound. So he went up to the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa one morning with a ten-pound shot and a one-pound shot, and just as the professors were proceeding with leisurely dignity to their respective lecture-rooms in the presence of their pupils, he attracted their attention and dropped the two weights from the top of the tower to their feet. The two weights arrived practically simultaneously. The professors, however, maintained that their eyes must have deceived them, since it was impossible that Aristotle could be in error.

On another occasion he was even more rash. Giovanni dei Medici, who was the Governor of Leghorn, invented a dredging machine of which he was very proud. Galileo pointed out that whatever else it might do it would not dredge, which proved to be a fact. This caused Giovanni to become an ardent Aristotelian.

Galileo became unpopular and was hissed at his lectures—a fate which has at times also befallen Einstein in Berlin. Then he made a telescope and invited the professors to look through it at Jupiter's moons. They refused on the ground that Aristotle had not mentioned these satellites, and therefore anybody who

thought he saw them must be mistaken.

The experiment from the Leaning Tower of Pisa illustrated Galileo's first important piece of work, namely, the establishment of the Law of Falling Bodies, according to which all bodies fall at the same rate in a vacuum and at the end of a given time have a velocity proportional to the time in which they have been falling, and have traversed a distance proportional to the square of that time. Aristotle had maintained otherwise, but neither he nor any of his successors throughout nearly two thousand years had taken the trouble to find out whether what he said was true. The idea of doing so was a novelty, and Galileo's disrespect for authority was considered abominable. He had, of course, many friends, men to whom the spectacle of intelligence was delightful in itself. Few such men, however, held academic posts, and university opinion was bitterly hostile to his discoveries.

As everyone knows, he came in conflict with the Inquisition at the end of his life for maintaining that the earth goes round the sun. He had had a previous minor encounter from which he had emerged without great damage, but in the year 1632 he published a book of dialogues on the Copernican and Ptolemaic system, in which he had the temerity to place some remarks that had been made by the Pope into the mouth of a character named Simplicius. The Pope had hitherto been friendly to him, but at this point became furious. Galileo was living at Florence on terms of friendship with the Grand Duke, but the Inquisition sent for him to come to Rome to be tried and threatened the Grand Duke with pains and penalties if he continued to shelter Galileo. Galileo was at this time seventy years old, very ill, and going blind; he sent a medical certificate to the effect that he was not fit to travel, so the Inquisition sent a doctor of their own with orders that as soon as he was well enough he should be brought in chains. Upon hearing that this order was on its

way, he set out voluntarily. By means of threats he was induced to make submission.

It is not true that, after reciting this adjuration, he muttered '*Eppur si muove*.' It was the world that said this—not Galileo.

The Inquisition stated that Galileo's fate should be 'a warning to others to abstain from delinquencies of this sort.' In this they were successful, so far, at least, as Italy was concerned. Galileo was the last of the great Italians. No Italian since his day has been capable of delinquencies of his sort. It cannot be said that the Church has altered greatly since the time of Galileo. Wherever it has power, as in Ireland and Boston, it still forbids all literature containing new ideas.

The conflict between Galileo and the Inquisition is not merely the conflict between free thought and bigotry or between science and religion; it is a conflict between the spirit of induction and the spirit of deduction. Those who believe in deduction as the method of arriving at knowledge are compelled to find their premises somewhere, usually in a sacred book. Deduction from inspired books is the method of arriving at truth employed by jurists, Christians, . . . and Communists. Since deduction as a means of obtaining knowledge collapses when doubt is thrown upon its premises, those who believe in deduction must necessarily be bitter against men who question the authority of the sacred books. Galileo questioned both Aristotle and the Scriptures, and thereby destroyed the whole edifice of medieval knowledge. His predecessors had known how the world was created, what was man's destiny, the deepest mysteries of metaphysics, and the hidden principles governing the behaviour of bodies. Throughout the moral and material universe nothing was mysterious to them, nothing hidden, nothing incapable of exposition in orderly syllogisms. Compared with all this wealth, what was left to the followers of Galileo?—a law of falling bodies, the theory of the pendulum, and Kepler's ellipses.

Can it be wondered at that the learned cried out at such a destruction of their hard-won wealth? As the rising sun scatters the multitude of stars, so Galileo's few proved truths banished the scintillating firmament of medieval certainties.

Socrates had said that he was wiser than his contemporaries because he alone knew that he knew nothing. This was a rhetorical device. Galileo could have said with truth that he knew something, but knew he knew little, while his Aristotelian contemporaries knew nothing, but thought they knew much. Knowledge, as opposed to fantasies of wish-fulfilment, is difficult to come by. A little contact with real knowledge makes fantasies less acceptable. As a matter of fact, knowledge is even harder to come by than Galileo supposed and much that he believed was only approximate; but in the process of acquiring knowledge at once secure and general, Galileo took the first great step. He is, therefore, the father of modern times. Whatever we may like or dislike about the age in which we live, its increase of population, its improvement in health, its trains, motor-cars, radio, politics, and advertisements of soap—all emanate from Galileo. If the Inquisition could have caught him young, we might not now be enjoying the blessings of air-warfare and poisoned gas, nor, on the other hand, the diminution of poverty and disease which is characteristic of our age.

It is customary amongst a certain school of sociologists to minimize the importance of intelligence, and to attribute all great events to large impersonal causes. I believe this to be an entire delusion. I believe that if a hundred of the men of the seventeenth century had been killed in infancy, the modern world would not exist. And of these hundred, Galileo is the chief.

NOTES

Abstruse: hard to understand, deep.

Freudian theory: Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), the inventor of psychoanalysis, attached great importance to dreams.

Wish fulfilment: 'the realization of the aim of a Freudian *wish* or impulse, whether that is an acknowledged wish or impulse or not, and whether its realization is desired by the conscious personality or not.' James Drever: *A Dictionary of Psychology.*

Bumptiousness: arrogance, the state of being disagreeably conceited.

Provoke an explosion: cause an outburst of feeling or anger.

Lactation: the suckling of young.

Sadism: the getting of pleasure of any sort from hurting another or others.

Anaesthetic: drug or gas which produces insensibility.

Tergiversation: shift, evasion, subterfuge.

A priori: (*Latin phrase for*) reasoning from cause to effect.

Deductive: reasoning from a known principle to an unknown, from the general to the specific, or from a premise to a logical conclusion.

Inductive: reasoning from particular facts or individual cases to a general conclusion.

Copernican theory: Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), astronomer, whose theory was that the sun is the centre of our astronomical system, and the planets move round it.

Diurnal: of each day.

Archimedes: 287-212 B.C., famous mathematician and scientist of Syracuse. He devised for Hieron, King of Syracuse, engines of war which baffled the Romans and prolonged the siege of Syracuse for three years.

Aristarchus of Samos: eminent astronomer and mathematician who lived about 280 B.C.

Renaissance: revival of arts and letters under the influence of classical models in the 14-16th centuries in Europe.

Eratosthenes: Greek geographer and mathematician, living about 235 B.C., whose map of the ancient world was the first to contain lines of latitude and longitude. His calculation of the earth's circumference has an error of less than two hundred miles.

Stadia: a Greek measure of length, about 202 yards.

Leonardo da Vinci: 1452-1519, painter, sculptor, architect, scientist and engineer. He designed several instruments of war.

Plutarch: Greek biographer and moralist, lived A.D. 46?-120?

Alexandria: city captured by Arabs in A.D. 641.

Philosopher's stone: alchemists tried to discover this; it was supposed to change the baser metals into gold.

Elixir of life: chemical combination that was to prolong human life indefinitely.

Roger Bacon: 1214-1294, English philosopher, scientist, and Franciscan friar who has been considered the founder of experimental science.

Scholastic system: system peculiar to medieval schoolmen.

Montaigne: 1533-1592: French writer and essayist.

Rabelais, 1494-1533: French humanist, and satirist.

Fais ce que voudras: (*French for*) do what you like.

Skew: oblique.

Gamin: neglected boy.

Kepler: 1571-1630, German astronomer.

Epicycle: small circle rolling on the circumference of a larger one.

Quantitative laws: laws dealing with measurement.

Dredging machine: machine for clearing out mud from river or sea bottom.

Albert Einstein: 1879-1955, physicist famous for his theory of Relativity.

Inquisition: general tribunal established in the 13th century

for the discovery and suppression of heresy and the punishment of heretics.

Ptolemaic: according to Ptolemy (Alexandrian astronomer) the earth was the fixed centre of the universe around which the heavenly bodies moved.

Temerity: rashness.

Abjuration: giving up of opinions publicly, recantation.

Scintillate: sparkle, twinke.

Euclid: Greek mathematician, who lived about 300 B.C. His *Elements* is a basic work in Geometry.

Emanate: come forth; issue, as from a source.

Fantasy: illusion, queer notion, visionary fancy.

THE DEFECTS OF ENGLISH PROSE

ARTHUR CLUTTON-BROCK

I CANNOT read Mr. Pearsall Smith's anthology of English Prose without thinking of the anthology I would make myself and wondering all the while why his differs from mine. Why, among writers of the past, does he omit Shaftesbury and give but one passage from Johnson, when he gives so many from Sir Thomas Browne? Why is there not more of Gibbon's wit, and why not his great passage upon the funeral and character of Julian the Apostate? Why so many short, laboured, and not profound sentences from Carlyle, followed by but one extract from Newman? Why the Gioconda passage from Pater, which has the defect that it is false? Why no Dickens at all, and no William Morris, and no W.H. Hudson? The answer is that Mr. Pearsall Smith lays his own emphasis in this anthology and I should lay another. For him our prose is greatest when it is nearest to poetry; it is overshadowed by our poetry and almost its poor relation. A Frenchman reading his anthology might say: 'All this is magnificent, but it is hardly prose. This is the literature of a people that can sing and preach, but cannot converse. I listen with amazement to all these prophets, but I should not care to talk with them; for, to tell the truth, they are not civilized. They do not seem to be men like myself, only abler; they are chiefs or elders at a tribal gathering, practising the eloquence of barbarians.'

Yet there is another side to English prose which Mr. Pearsall Smith almost ignores: perhaps because he is making an anthology and that other side cannot easily be exhibited in extracts. Prose of its very nature is longer than verse, and the virtues

peculiar to it manifest themselves gradually. If the cardinal virtue of poetry is love, the cardinal virtue of prose is justice; and, whereas love makes you act and speak on the spur of the moment, justice needs inquiry, patience, and a control even of the noblest passions. But English Prose, as Mr. Pearsall Smith presents it, is at the mercy of its passion and just only by accident. By justice here I do not mean justice only to particular people or ideas, but a habit of justice in all the processes of thought, a style tranquillized and a form moulded by that habit. The master of prose is not cold, but he will not let any word or image inflame him with a heat irrelevant to his purpose. Unhasting, unresting, he pursues it, subduing all the riches of his mind to it, rejecting all beauties that are not germane to it; making his own beauty out of the very accomplishment of it, out of the whole work and its proportions, so that you must read to the end before you know that it is beautiful. But he has his reward, for he is trusted and convinces, as those who are at the mercy of their own eloquence do not; and he gives a pleasure all the greater for being hardly noticed. In the best prose, whether narrative or argument, we are so led on as we read, that we do not stop to applaud the writer: nor do we stop to question him. But we stop, whether to applaud or to question, at a sentence such as this, which Mr. Pearsall Smith gives us from Carlyle:

'Brave Sea captain, Norse Sea-king Colombus, my hero, royalest Sea-king of all! it is no friendly environment this of thine, in the waste deep waters: round thee mutinous discouraged souls, behind thee disgrace and ruin, before thee the unpenetrated veil of Night.'

If a writer continues long in this style, he wearies us like a man talking at the top of his voice; and if he does not continue, the passage distracts us with its incongruity, like a sudden shouting. Carlyle here, and often, yields to a habit of excitement as if

lack of fitness.

he had a right to be indulged in it. He is like a man who will make speeches at the dinner-table to show the force of his convictions. These are the manners of egotism, and egotism is the worst of all faults in prose.

For prose is the achievement of civilization, of people who have learned to discuss without blows or invective, who know that truth is hard to find and worth finding, who do not begin by accusing an opponent of wickedness, but elicit reason and patience by displaying them. You cannot say in poetry what the best prose says, or accomplish what the best prose accomplishes. Civilization may not surpass a primitive society in heights of rapture or heroism, but it is, if it be civilization, better for everyday life, kinder, more rational, more sustained in effort; and this kindness and reason and sustained effort are expressed and encouraged in the masterpieces of prose. The French understood this long ago, because they prize civilization and enjoy it. Pascal, writing his *Provincial Letters* in 1656 upon a subject obscured by medieval subtleties and distorted by party passions, is already just, polite, and lucid; he does not even affect the magnificent disdain of Gibbon, but is a civilized man talking to other civilized men, and therefore all the more deadly in debate. But it is fallacies that he would kill, not those who maintain them. He knows that the art of controversy is, not to begin with invective, but to state your case in such a way that those who like invective will supply it themselves against your adversary.

So we read Milton's controversy for its accidents, splendid as they are, but Pascal's still for the controversy itself. Though he is not clothed in shining armour, he fights for the children of light in all ages, with no pretence of being an angel or a dervish, but quietly appealing to the everlasting reason from whence comes his help. In this book of Mr. Pearsall Smith's, with its array of great names and great passages, we notice how

his moderns seem to archaize when they would soar, as if they must pretend to be of the giant race before the flood so as to believe in their own greatness. Emerson says:

'Our friendships hurry to short and poor conclusions, because we have made them a texture of wine and dreams, instead of the tough fibre of the human heart.'

Ruskin, even in *Praeterita*, writes thus of his first sight of the Alps:

'Infinitely beyond all that we had ever thought or dreamed—the seen walls of lost Eden could not have been more beautiful to us; not more awful round Heaven, the walls of sacred Death.'

Pater begins a paragraph:

'I have remarked how in the process of our brain-building, as the house of thought in which we live gets itself together like some airy bird's nest of floating thistle-down and chance straws, compact at last, little accidents have their consequence.'

Stevenson, in a letter, and talking of familiar things, says:

'Methought you asked me—frankly, was I happy? Happy (said I); I was happy only once; that was at Hyeres; it came to an end from a variety of reasons, decline of health, change of place, increase of money, age with his stealing steps; since then, as before then, I know not what it means.'

It is always finely, but not naturally, said.

Each writer seems to have a model not quite suited to the matter or the occasion, and makes us think of this model when we should be thinking only of what he has to say. But the prose which interests us most, and persuades us unconsciously to go on reading it, seems to be made by the matter and the occasion; it is like talk between intimates, and the writer draws us into intimacy by his manner of address, which assumes that we do not wish to be tricked or dazzled, that if he has anything worth saying, we shall listen to it for its own sake.

There is less of this prose in our literature than we could wish, but more than we should gather from Mr. Pearsall Smith's anthology. It began to be written about the time of the Restoration by Cowley, Halifax, and Dryden among others. Mr. Pearsall Smith gives one short passage from Cowley, one from Halifax, and none from Dryden—perhaps he thinks that the best of Dryden's prose is in his verse. But the first easy master of it is Shaftesbury, especially in his *Letter concerning Enthusiasm*. Here the case is all the more remarkable because he is talking of religion and saying things both novel and profound about it. His plea is for good humour in controversy, and he gives an example of it in his own letter. He begins lightly enough, and then, with a humane and natural art, leads us into seriousness:

'This, my Lord, is the security against superstition: To remember that there is nothing in God but what is God-like; and that He is either not at all or truly and perfectly good. But when we are afraid to use our reason freely, even on that very question, "Whether He really be, or not"; we then actually presume Him bad, and flatly contradict that pretended character of goodness and greatness, whilst we discover this mistrust of His temper, and fear His anger and resentment in the case of this freedom of inquiry.'

But though this is just and even now fresh, we cannot deny that it lacks the music and images of Jeremy Taylor or Milton; and they are absent from the prose of Johnson and all the eighteenth century. For that reason the Romantics despised even its virtues; for them, again, prose became the poor relation of poetry, and must wear its cast-off clothes; or else they wrote like orators addressing a crowd with repetitions and loud emphasis, abrupt transitions and noisy images. Hazlitt is more eloquent than scrupulous; he never seems to be alone with you as you read him, but rather speaking to catch votes, even

though it be for the best writers or painters; and Macaulay, ignored by Mr. Pearsall Smith, is worse. His prose has all the defects of a nation political rather than social, he is incapable of meditation or even of converse, but lectures always; while Burke writes of the Sublime and Beautiful like an orator.

So, but for a few shy, never enough honoured writers, there is one whole province of the English mind left out of our prose, for we are capable of meditation and intimate talk; we are more civilized than our manners or our style. Mr. W.H. Hudson, for instance, seems always to be meditating or remembering; writing for him is a means of saying what he would never say aloud. He makes his dearest friend of the reader, and confides in him with speech that has the beauty of a wild animal's eyes. And Mark Rutherford, with a different kind of matter but the same shyness and melancholy faith, arouses a like confidence in us. These writers seldom say much in a single sentence or even paragraph, but they have a cumulative power that cannot be proved by quotation, a wandering music that blows where it lists, because they never force their inspiration or tell you what they have not got to say. Their peculiar quality is justice; they describe without a laboured eagerness or momentum, and without vivid words, just what they have seen and felt. They do not exploit their loves or their hatreds, and it is wonderful that you should remember so well what is said with so little emphasis or apparent skill of words. Yet it is remembered, like a thought that does not need saying; it sinks deep into the mind, beyond language, like an actual experience, and, if you read their books with care, you are changed as if by an event.

But such writers are likely to remain few, for they are little encouraged. We are not yet a public of readers civilized enough to demand the highest virtues of prose; we prefer 'clamorous sublimities' and phrases that ask to be noticed; we must be urged through a book by the crack of the writer's whip. Yet

still one dreams of a prose that has never yet been written in English, though the language is made for it and there are minds not incapable of it, a prose dealing with the greatest things quietly and justly as men deal with them in their secret meditations, seeming perhaps to wander, but always advancing in an unbroken sequence of thought, with a controlled ardour of discovery and the natural beauties of a religious mind. Johnson might have written it, if he had had a stronger sense of beauty and more faith in the flights of reason; Newman if he had been a greater master of words and less afraid of his own questioning; Henry James if he had exercised his subtlety on larger things. But the best of our prose writers, living or dead, are not civilized enough, or too much in love with something else, or not enough in love with anything, to write the prose we dream of. The English Plato is still to be.

NOTES

Julian the Apostate: Emperor of Rome, 361-63. A.D. Emperor Constantine issued a famous edict tolerating Christianity. Julian, one of the emperors who followed him, adopted an anti-Christian policy. *Apostate:* one who abandons his religious faith, etc.

Gioconda passage from Pater: Walter Pater's descriptions of a portrait, more commonly called the Mona Lisa, by Leonardo da Vinci.

Cardinal virtues: the basic virtues in *theology*—prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance.

Germane: closely related, appropriate.

Incongruity: lack of fitness or appropriateness.

Invective: violent verbal attack.

Elicit: to draw forth, extract.

Pascal, Blaise: 1623-1662, famous French mathematician and

philosopher.

Archaize: imitate or affect old language or technique.

Eden: garden where Adam and Eve lived at the creation of the earth.

Restoration: the re-establishment of the monarchy in England in 1660 under Charles II.

Scrupulous: showing careful attention to what is right or wrong.

Cumulative: accumulated, increase by one addition after another.

Clamorous sublimities: loud or strident expression of outwardly noble themes.

ASSAULT ON BRITAIN 1940

LORD ISMAY

I USED often to feel homesick when serving overseas, and the first sight of the white cliffs of Dover after a long absence never failed to give me a thrill of pride and thankfulness. The greyer the skies, the more homely seemed the welcome. And when I left for abroad again, I always uttered a silent prayer that I might come back again in due season to the land of my fathers. But I never realized how precious England was to me until she was in imminent danger of violation. That she would be invaded was highly probable; that she would be subject to frightful air bombardment was certain. The very thought gave me a spasm of almost physical pain.

It seemed unlikely that invasion would be attempted for at least a few weeks. Hitler could not in his wildest dreams have anticipated the rapidity of his victory over France, and it was very doubtful whether his plans for landing in England were as yet complete. In any case, it would take some time to assemble the necessary shipping and other paraphernalia. We could therefore count on a respite of at least a couple of months in which to improve our defences against invasion.

But air attack was a very different proposition. The Luftwaffe could be at our throats almost any day, and we were by no means unprepared to meet them. The Air Staff, with splendid assistance from our men of science, had rendered great service to the country by the ingenuity and thoroughness of their preparations for the defence of the homeland. Mr. Baldwin was possibly right, though not perhaps well advised, when he told the House of Commons in 1932 that 'the bomber would

always get through'. But since then the modern fighter, modern A-A guns, the Observer Corps, and radar, working under unified control from ingeniously equipped and well protected operation rooms, had drastically changed the situation. We could now be pretty certain that in daylight the attacker—be he bomber or fighter—would be detected and probably engaged before he crossed our coast, provided, of course, that there were sufficient fighter squadrons for home defence. But were there? That was the question on which our survival depended.

Looking back on all the arguments that we used to have in our pre-war planning, I believe that the Air Staff were, on the whole, nearer the mark than either of the older Services in their conception of the war of the future. They had already proved correct in the contention that naval forces, operation without air cover, would be very seriously handicapped; and they were to prove equally correct in resisting the demands of the General Staff for a separate allocation of air forces to the Army. Nevertheless, there was one point on which their attitude was open to question.

As the speed, range, and bomb-carrying capacity of the German Air Force continued to increase, and war loomed nearer and nearer, it was proposed from time to time that the number of fighter squadrons should be increased. But the Air Ministry were opposed to this, unless the number of bomber squadrons was simultaneously increased in proportion. They said that multiplication of fighters was a heresy which appealed only to those who were ignorant about air power and did not understand that the counter-offensive by bombers must always be our crowning aim. In theory they may have been perfectly correct, but to the layman it seemed that the particular circumstances of those days justified a departure from the text-books. The vital need was to ensure that the Citadel could

be effectively defended until such time as we could build up the necessary apparatus—including, of course, large numbers of bombers—to assume the offensive. As things turned out, the number of fighters available for Home Defence in July 1940 was the barest minimum. There was no margin whatsoever.

Before the Battle of Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington is alleged to have pointed to a lone British soldier standing near-by and to have said: 'There, it all depends on that article whether we do the business or not. Give me enough of it, and I am sure.' Substitute the Hurricane or Spitfire pilot for the lone British soldier, and Air Chief Marshal Dowding might have used much the same words. He must have felt intensely thankful that the solemn warning which he had given to the Cabinet in the previous month about the danger of sending more fighter squadrons to France had been heeded.

The German Air Force had been at full stretch throughout the Battle of France, and it was not until the first week in July that the Battle of Britain started in earnest. As usual, the Prime Minister took every opportunity to go and see things for himself, and I accompanied him on many of his visits to fighter stations in Kent and Sussex. From the moment one set foot on the tarmac, one sensed the tension in the air—the pilots standing by 'on readiness', waiting to 'scramble' into their machines at a moment's notice. It was impossible to look at those young men, who might within a matter of minutes be fighting and dying to save us, without mingled emotions of wonder, gratitude, and humility. The physical and mental strain of 'the long hours at dispersal, the constant flying at high altitudes (two or three sorties a day were normal, six or seven not uncommon),'[1] must have been prodigious. And yet they were so cheerful, so confident, and so obviously dedicated. They were

1. *The Royal Air Force*, page 177, published by H.M. Stationery Office.

always thrilled to see Churchill, and they gave me a kindly welcome. But they seemed a race apart, and I felt an intruder. They brought to my mind something that I had once read in[1] the Old Testament. I looked it up when I got home. 'And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.'

The Operations Room of No. II Group, Fighter Command, was Churchill's favourite port of call at this period. It was the nerve centre from which he could follow the course of the whole air battle. The sequel to a visit in mid-August must be told. There had been heavy fighting throughout the afternoon; and at one moment every single squadron in the Group was engaged; there was nothing in reserve, and the map table showed new waves of attackers crossing the coast. I felt sick with fear. As the evening closed in the fighting died down, and we left by car for Chequers. Churchill's first words were: 'Don't speak to me; I have never been so moved.' After about five minutes he leaned forward and said, 'Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few.' The words burned into my brain and I repeated them to my wife when I got home. Churchill, too, had evidently photographed them in his mind; for, as everyone knows, he used them in a speech that was heard throughout the world.

Except for these occasional excursions, it was my lot to remain in Whitehall and await the results of each day's fighting. Mercifully, there was never any shortage of work to provide distraction, and now and then there was the minor excitement of seeing formations of enemy planes over London. But it was almost impossible to get the air battle out of one's mind. Everything that we held dearer than life itself was at stake. All London, nay, all England, could think of little else. 'What is the score today?' was the question on every lip in bus, Tube,

1. Malachi, chapter III, verse 17.

factory and office. The hall porters at hotels and clubs had to supply the answer a dozen times a day.

To learn of large numbers of enemy aircraft destroyed was of course encouraging, but equally important was the tally of our own losses. Our survival depended on whether they could be made good sufficiently quickly by new production and repairs. It was at this juncture that Churchill's insistence on the creation of a Ministry of Aircraft Production, and his selection of Lord Beaverbrook to take charge of it, paid handsome rewards. This is no reflection on the splendid work done by Air Chief Marshal Sir Wilfrid Freeman, Air Member for Development and Production in the immediately pre-war years. Without the solid foundations which he laid, neither Beaverbrook nor anyone else could have achieved very much by the time the Battle of Britain had to be fought. Nevertheless, desperate situations call for desperate remedies, and Beaverbrook had just the qualities which were needed. He was in his element. His dynamic energy and remarkable flair for improvisation brushed aside all obstacles. In the pursuit of anything which he wanted—whether materials, machine tools, or labour—he never hesitated, so rival departments alleged, to indulge in barefaced robbery. His office was pandemonium, especially in the night watches. But the results were astounding. Even so, it was not possible to satisfy the men who were doing the fighting, and an enjoyable, though perhaps apocryphal, story went the rounds of Whitehall. An outraged squadron leader, who had been disappointed by the non-arrival of some badly needed spare parts, rang up the Air Ministry and peremptorily demanded to speak to the appropriate person. As soon as he was connected he embarked on a violent tirade against the negligence and uselessness of the Air Ministry and all who dwelt therein. When he paused for breath, the voice at the end asked, 'Do you know who you are speaking to?' 'No,' came

the reply. 'Well, it's Air Chief Marshal Sir So and So,' said the voice. 'Do you know who you are speaking to?' asked the squadron leader. 'No,' came the reply. 'Thank God,' said the young man, and abruptly rang off.

Gradually, as the days passed, we seemed to be getting on top. Between the beginning of the battle and mid-September, we had destroyed over 1,100 German aircraft, and lost less than 650 fighters in the process. Goering was no longer prepared to face the RAF in daylight. The Battle of Britain had been won. It had been 'a damned nice thing; the nearest run thing you ever saw in your life'.[1]

Personally I always felt that if we won the Battle of Britain the Germans would not invade, and that if we lost it they would have no need to invade. It would be a case of 'Movement Tables' and 'Occupation Instructions' instead of 'Operation Orders'. That over-simplification must be explained.

So long as Fighter Command were able to operate effectively, invasion on a large enough scale to hold out good hopes of success would involve overwhelming difficulties and prohibitive casualties. As a prelude to the operation, masses of shipping and landing-craft of every description would have to be assembled in the ports of northern Europe. This would take a matter of days, if not weeks; and all the time this closely packed and highly vulnerable mass would be attacked night and day by the Royal Air Force. The next problem for the enemy would be to embark large numbers of troops and masses of heavy equipment under continuous air attack. I was astonished to hear it argued at about this time that the escape of our army from Dunkirk had shown what could be done, even in the face of a vastly superior air force, and that the embarkation of a German army in the face of attack by our numerically inferior

1. The Duke of Wellington to Mr Creevey on the day after the Battle of Waterloo.

air forces would not be too difficult. There is no parallel between the two cases. Our men left Dunkirk as naked individuals, in no semblance of formation, and without any equipment except their rifles. The Germans, on the other hand, would have to embark in formed bodies, ready to fight immediately on landing, and with all the paraphernalia that the modern army requires. Then would come the sea passage in the face of vastly superior naval forces. The German Navy would have little stomach for this trial of strength. Finally, there would be the hazards of disembarkation by those who had survived the attention of the Royal Air Force while they were embarking, and the attentions of both the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force while they were on passage. They would find the beaches heavily mined, and wires, and the exits from them obstructed by every kind of obstacle; and they would be subjected to a deadly fire from defenders on the ground and in the air. It is therefore my considered opinion that, with Fighter Command still in being, a German invasion would have suffered much the same fate as the Spanish Armada.

Now let us consider what would have happened if the Battle of Britain had been lost. The Luftwaffe could have proceeded to wipe out in their own time and without any significant hindrance, first our air stations, then our aircraft factories, then perhaps our other munition factories, then our ports, and so on. The point would have been reached, perhaps quite soon, when we would have been bereft of all means of serious opposition. We could have continued the war from Canada—I hope that we would have done so. But the physical occupation of Britain would have presented no serious difficulty.

When I was thirteen years old, I won as a prize a book called *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World* by Sir Edward Creasy. It seemed a curious book to present to an undersized boy who had no intention in those days of being a soldier, and it remained

unopened for several years. In later life I read it many times from cover to cover, and I often wondered whether I agreed with the author's choice. If I were now asked to name the battles which had had the greatest influence on the history of the world, I should unhesitatingly put the Battle of Britain very high on my list.

Having failed to subdue the Royal Air Force in daylight fighting, Hitler decided to break the spirit of the British people by night bombing. Thus the Battle of Britain gradually merged into what became known as the Blitz. In the first place the Lutwaffe concentrated on London, the finest target in the world for indiscriminate attack. There was no precedent for this kind of warfare. It might be immediately and overwhelmingly successful or it might completely fail in its purpose. All would depend—as it always does in war—on the human element. Would the civilian population, however brave, resolute, disciplined and well-organized, be able to stand up to the casualties and sufferings that were bound to be their lot? London, and later other cities in Britain, were soon to give the answer to that question.

The Blitz started in earnest on 7 September. At first we could do little but take our punishment, and it was not long before the Prime Minister set up the Night Air Defence Committee under his own chairmanship. Ministers and airmen, A-A gunners and scientists sat together regularly to thrash out ways and means of combating the danger. Within a few months, the most promising solutions had been identified and pressed forward with the utmost vigour. Soon there was a progressive increase in the number of enemy aircraft destroyed, and those that survived were kept at a respectful height by the improved efficiency of the A-A guns. The situation improved out of recognition.

Churchill lost no opportunity of visiting the stricken areas,

and I had my first experience of the effects of air bombardment on a big scale when I accompanied him to the London Docks immediately after the first heavy attack. The destruction was much more devastating than I had imagined it would be. Fires were still raging all over the place; some of the larger buildings were mere skeletons, and many of the smaller houses had been reduced to piles of rubble. The sight of tiny paper Union Jacks which had already been planted on two or three of these pathetic heaps brought a lump to one's throat.

Our first stop was at an air-raid shelter in which about forty persons had been killed and many more wounded by a direct hit, and we found a big crowd, male and female, young and old, but all seemingly very poor. One might have expected them to be resentful against the authorities responsible for their protection; but, as Churchill got out of his car, they literally mobbed him. 'Good old Winnie,' they cried. 'We thought you'd come and see us. We can take it. Give it 'em back.' Churchill broke down, and as I was struggling to get to him through the crowd, I heard an old woman say, 'You see, he really cares; he's crying.' Having pulled himself together, he proceeded to march through dockland at breakneck speed. I could never understand how he managed it. He was no longer a young man, and normally he never took any exercise at all. If he had been asked to walk from Downing Street to the House of Commons, he would have refused indignantly. And yet, on his inspection visits, he would cover miles of ground at a remarkable pace.

On and on we went until darkness began to fall. The dock authorities were anxious that Churchill should leave for home at once, but he was in one of his most obstinate moods and insisted that he wanted to see everything. Consequently, we were still within the brightly-lit target when the Luftwaffe arrived on the scene and the fireworks started. It was difficult to

get a large car out of the area, owing to many of the streets being completely blocked by fallen houses, and as we were trying to turn in a very narrow space, a shower of incendiary bombs fell just in front of us. Churchill, feigning innocence, asked what they were. I replied that they were incendiaries, and that we were evidently in the middle of the bull's-eye!

It was very late by the time we got back to No. 10 Downing Street, and Cabinet Ministers, secretaries, policemen and orderlies were waiting in the long passage in great anxiety. Churchill strode through them without a word, leaving me to be rebuked by all and sundry for having allowed the Prime Minister to take such risks. Fatigue and fright are not conducive to patience, and I am alleged to have told the assembled company, in the language of the barrack-room, that anybody who imagined that he could control the Prime Minister on jaunts of this kind was welcome to try his hand on the next occasion.

London was bombarded for the next fifty nights on end. The attack generally started directly it was dark, and the all-clear seldom sounded before daylight. Considering that Civil Defence had been on a voluntary basis until a few years before the war and that even then it was starved of money, the arrangements proved a good deal better than we deserved, and they were progressively improved in the light of experience. But the decisive factor was the spirit of the Londoners. They were helpful, adaptable, cheerful, fearless, and utterly defiant. The womenfolk in particular were amazing. The courage of the charwoman who used to clean my office was typical of her sex. She generally arrived before the last German bombers had left, and for the first fortnight or so she was full of cheerful gossip when she awakened me. But one morning she was in floods of tears. She said that nearly all the houses in her street had been destroyed, that her sister had been killed, that she never got any sleep, and that she could not stand it any longer. I told her

that I was just as frightened as she was, and that the only solution that I could think of was to tell Hitler that we could not take it, and that he had better come over and occupy England. Whereupon the old lady gave vent to a flood of the most sulphurous language that I have ever heard. Her description of Hitler's ancestry to the third and fourth generation was a masterpiece. The outburst evidently gave her relief; anyhow, there were no more tears or grumblings.

It was at this time that a letter written by a young working girl to a friend came into my hands. One or two extracts must be preserved: 'What's happened in London simply defies description, "Dante's Inferno" must have been a picnic in comparison . . . . None of us are afraid to die, in fact we expect any minute to be our last but this is not a despairing attitude, it is more one of defiance; let them do their damnedest they can't and won't get us down. We'll stand on our feet to the end of this murderous fight and we will come out on top. We've all got our blood up. I feel I could strangle a thousand Germans and enjoy doing it. I am going to get the shelter ready for tonight before I write any more of my murderous thoughts. I can't cry over anything but I've learned to swear like a Billingsgate porter.'

Early in November Goering switched his attack from London, first to the great industrial cities and then to our principal ports. I have never understood his reason. One would have thought that to continue to concentrate on London would have paid a better return. But if he imagined that the inhabitants of his new target areas might not show the same fortitude and adaptability as the Londoners, he was grievously mistaken. They were one and all completely undaunted.

From the moment that the Germans were in occupation of the northern coast of Europe, supreme efforts had to be made to put the whole island into a state of defence. Churchill

interested himself in every detail and paid frequent visits to the threatened areas. At the start it was a very depressing experience. The amount of equipment was negligible. Tanks, artillery, Bren guns, anti-tank rifles and anti-tank guns were few and far between. The construction of fixed defences, the protection of the beaches by mines and obstacles, the obstruction of open spaces against parachute landings, seemed to progress, but slowly. Most of the troops were less than half-trained, and there were not nearly enough of them. From time to time Churchill would suggest to a commander that the defence of such and such an area ought to be strengthened. The commander would wholeheartedly agree, but point out that this could only be done by weakening some other equally important sector. Churchill used to say that he felt like a man trying to go to sleep on a very cold night with a blanket which was too small for him. If his feet were covered, his shoulders got cold; and if he pulled up the blanket to cover his shoulders, some other part of his body had to suffer.

Dover exercised a particular attraction for him. Apart from the fact that it seemed certain to be in the 'invasion area', and therefore required special supervision, there was always the chance of seeing an air battle or of being on the spot when the heavy guns on both sides of the Channel were in action. Our own heavies had been manufactured in 1918, when Churchill was Minister of Munitions, and had, on his insistence, been carefully maintained ever since. It was on his orders that they had been installed at Dover as a counter to the German heavies at Calais and Cap Gris Nez. It is doubtful whether these monsters had any significant practical effect, but they were good for the morale of their respective sides. It is consoling to a man who is under bombardment to know that his enemy is catching it too.

One day while we were visiting Ramsgate there was a tip-

and-run raid by a couple of German aircraft, and we were hustled into a public shelter. No smoking was allowed and Churchill obediently sacrificed his newly-lit cigar. The first thing that we saw on coming to the surface again was a tea shop which had been wrecked by the blast of a bomb. Part of the roof had fallen in, and there was a shambles of broken crockery, chairs and tables. The aged proprietress, her livelihood gone, was sobbing her heart out. Directly we got into the train to return to London, Churchill said: 'Arrangements must be made for poor people like that to be given immediate compensation in order that they may be able to start up their businesses again.' And there and then he dictated a minute to the Chancellor of the Exchequer asking for a scheme to be worked out at once. This was done; and I have an idea that the proposal got through the Treasury in record time. Churchill used to say that power for the sake of lording it over our fellow creatures was base, but that power which enabled a man to give the right orders and have them obeyed was a blessing. In Shakespeare's words: 'It is excellent to have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant.'[1]

On one of his earlier visits Churchill espied a party of middle-aged men in civilian clothes wearing armlets marked, 'LDV' (Local Defence Volunteers). He had already proposed that this uninspiring title should be changed to 'Home Guard', and the sight of those armlets decided him to press the point again. Within a few weeks the 'LDV' badges were called in and 'HG' badges issued in their place. What a difference that change made to the *esprit de corps* of that gallant company of veterans.

Churchill was always insistent that there was much more in a name than many people seemed to think. On learning that Communal Feeding Centres were about to be established,

1. *Measure for Measure*, Act II, Sc. 2.

he addressed a protest to the Minister of Food. 'It is an odious expression, suggestive of Communism and the workhouse. I suggest you call them "British Restaurants". Everybody associates the word "restaurant" with a good meal, and they may as well have the name if they cannot get anything else.'

His interest in terminology even extended to the selection of code names for operations. Facetious names met with vehement disapproval. How would a mother feel if she were to hear that her son had been killed in an enterprise called BUNNY HUG? Much better use the names of 'heroes of antiquity, or figures from Greek and Roman mythology.'

The titles of the six volumes of his *Second World War* show his flair for finding appropriate phrases. *The Gathering Storm, Their Finest Hour, The Grand Alliance, The Hinge of Fate, Closing the Ring, Triumph and Tragedy*. There, in nineteen words, is a panorama of the origin, the course and the aftermath of the war.

I often wondered why he did not insist on changing the name of the War Office, which, to the uninformed, tends to convey the impression that it is a Department responsible for running a war. Why not substitute the title 'Army Ministry'? This would be a faithful description of its function, and the only objection which I have heard is that it would be a break with tradition. Considering the traditions that have had to be sacrificed by the disbandment of famous regiments or their amalgamation with others, this argument is scarcely conclusive. Many of us have had tears in our eyes when watching the ceremonial laying up of Regimental Colours, but I have yet to meet the soldier who would feel the slightest pang if he were told that his destiny would be controlled by the Army Ministry instead of the War Office.

Churchill used to hold periodic Invasion Conferences throughout the summer and autumn. He himself presided, and in ad-

dition to the Chiefs of Staff, all the Commanders-in-Chief were present. The Army had only one—the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces; the Navy had five Commanders-in-Chief—the Home Fleet, the Nore, Portsmouth, Plymouth and Western Approaches; and the Royal Air Force had three—the Commanders-in-Chief of Bomber, Fighter and Coastal Commands.

Suggestions were made that in the event of invasion a Supreme Commander would be necessary; but it is difficult to see how any military figure could have performed the duties of Generalissimo not only of all those Fighting Services, but also of the civilian population which would be inextricably involved. The large number of political and domestic issues that would arise could not have been decided by anybody except the War Cabinet. Thank God no decision on this problem had to be taken, but it seems likely that, if the worst had come to the worst, the Supreme Command over the whole field would have been exercised by the Chiefs of Staff under the direct and continuous supervision of the Prime Minister.

An incident which occurred at one of the earliest Invasion Conferences must be related. The problem under discussion was the part to be played by the Home Fleet in the event of invasion, and the Commander-in-Chief asked that it should be clearly understood that his heavy ships could not, in any circumstances, operate south of the Wash. Everyone expected an explosion from Mr. Churchill, and his reaction was surprising. He said, with an indulgent smile, that he never took much notice of what the Royal Navy said that they would, or would not, do in advance of an event, since they invariably undertook the apparently impossible without a moment's hesitation whenever the situation so demanded. If, for example, two or three nurses were wrecked on a desert island, the Navy would rush to their rescue, through typhoons and uncharted seas; and he had not a shadow of doubt that if the Germans invaded the

south coast of Britain we would see every available battleship storming through the Straits of Dover. Most of the meeting agreed with Churchill, and I am sure that the German admirals would have considered his forecast of our naval action most realistic.

NOTES

Paraphernalia: different things forming a person's property or used for some special work; personal belongings.
Luftwaffe: the Nazi air force in World War 1.
Older services: army, navy, etc.
Heresy: opinion against generally supported belief, especially in a religion.
Tarmac: road-like part of an airfield on to which aircraft land and from which they take off.
Sortie: raid, operational flight by one aircraft.
Dedicated: devoted.
Lord of Hosts: Jehovah, God.
Tally: account.
Flair: natural good taste in some special field.
Improvisation: something done without preparation to meet a situation.
Barefaced: without shame.
Pandemonium: state of disorder; great, uncontrolled noise.
Watch: guard's period of duty, or post.
Outraged: seriously offended.
Tirade: long, violent or angry outbreak of talk.
Goering: Colonel-General Hermann, Prime Minister of Prussia, and German Air Minister.
Blitz: destructive attack by aerial bombardment.
Thrash out: have full discussion of a question.
Mob: make mass attack on a person.

Bull's-eye: middle circle of target.

Language of barrack room: coarse language, swear words.

Charwoman: woman who comes by the day or hour to do rough housework.

Dante's Inferno: that part of *The Divine Comedy* which describes hell and the sufferings of the damned.

Swear: use swear words or shocking language.

Billingsgate: fish market in London, notorious for the foul language used there.

Tip-and-run-raid: raid in which the raider appears suddenly and makes off immediately after attacking.

Morale: moral condition, especially (of troops) as regards discipline and confidence.

Shambles: place where animals are put to death for food; or where great distruction of persons takes place.

Esprit de corps: (*French for*) the spirit of a body of persons, group spirit, sense of pride in common interests and activities, as shared by those in the same profession.

Terminology: system of names used in some science, art, etc.

Facetious: marked by attempted humour.

Panorama: wide view.

Aftermath: outcome.

Generalissimo: (*Italian for*) commander-in-chief of armed forces.

POLITICS AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GEORGE ORWELL

Most people who bother with the matter at all would admit that the English language is in a bad way, but it is generally assumed that we cannot by conscious action do anything about it. Our civilization is decadent and our language—so the argument runs—must inevitably share in the general collapse. It follows that any struggle against the abuse of language is a sentimental archaism, like preferring candles to electric light or hansom cabs to aeroplanes. Underneath this lies the half-conscious belief that language is a natural growth and not an instrument which we shape for our own purposes.

Now, it is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes: it is not due simply to the bad influence of this or that individual writer. But an effect can become a cause, reinforcing the original cause and producing the same effect in an intensified form, and so on indefinitely. A man may take to drink because he feels himself to be a failure, and then fail all the more completely because he drinks. It is rather the same thing that is happening to the English language. It becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts. The point is that the process is reversible. Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits which spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think clearly is a necessary first step towards political regeneration: so that the fight against bad English is not frivolous and is not the

exclusive concern of professional writers. I will come back to this presently, and I hope that by that time the meaning of what I have said here will have become clearer. Meanwhile, here are five specimens of the English language as it is now habitually written.

These five passages have not been picked out because they are especially bad—I could have quoted far worse if I had chosen—but because they illustrate various of the mental vices from which we now suffer. They are a little below the average, but are fairly representative samples. I number them so that I can refer back to them when necessary:

(1) I am not, indeed, sure whether it is not true to say that the Milton who once seemed not unlike a seventeenth-century Shelley had not become, out of an experience ever more bitter in each year, more alien [*sic*] to the founder of that Jesuit sect which nothing could induce him to tolerate.

Professor Harold Laski (Essay in *Freedom of Expression*).

(2) Above all, we cannot play ducks and drakes with a native battery of idioms which prescribes such egregious collocations of vocables as the Basic *put up with* for *tolerate* or *put at a loss* for *bewilder*.

Professor Lancelot Hogben (*Interglossa.*)

(3) On the one side we have the free personality: by definition it is not neurotic, for it has neither conflict nor dream. Its desires, such as they are, are transparent, for they are just what institutional approval keeps in the forefront of consciousness; another institutional pattern would alter their number and intensity; there is little in them that is natural, irreducible, or culturally dangerous. But *on the other side*, the social bond itself is nothing but the mutual reflection of these self-secure in-

tegrities. Recall the definition of love. Is not this the very picture of a small academic? Where is there a place in this hall of mirrors for either personality or fraternity?

Essay on psychology in *Politics* (New York).

(4) All the best people, from the gentlemen's clubs, and all the frantic captains, united in common hatred of Socialism and bestial horror of the rising tide of the mass revolutionary movement, have turned to acts of provocation, to foul incendiarism, to medieval legends of poisoned wells, to legalize their own destruction of proletarian organizations, and rouse the agitated petty-bourgeoisie to chauvinistic fervour on behalf of the fight against the revolutionary way out of the crisis.

Communist pamphlet.

(5) If a new spirit *is* to be infused into this old country, there is one thorny and contentious reform which must be tackled, and that is the humanization and galvanization of the B.B.C. Timidity here will bespeak canker and atrophy of the soul. The heart of Britain may be sound and of strong beat, for instance, but the British lion's roar at present is like that of Bottom in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*—as gentle as any sucking dove. A virile new Britain cannot continue indefinitely to be traduced in the eyes or rather ears, of the world by the effete languors of Langham Place, brazenly masquerading as 'standard English'. When the Voice of Britain is heard at nine o'clock, better far and infinitely less ludicrous to hear aitches honestly dropped than the present priggish, inflated, inhibited, school-ma'amish arch braying of blameless bashful mewing maidens!

Letter in *Tribune*.

Each of these passages has faults of it own, but, quite apart from avoidable ugliness, two qualities are common to all of them. The first is staleness of imagery: the other is lack of pre-

cision. The writer either has a meaning and cannot express it, or he inadvertently says something else, or he is almost indifferent as to whether his words mean anything or not. This mixture of vagueness and sheer incompetence is the most marked characteristic of modern English prose, and especially of any kind of political writing. As soon as certain topics are raised, the concrete melts into the abstract and no one seems able to think of turns of speech that are not hackneyed: prose consists less and less of words chosen for the sake of their meaning, and more and more of *phrases* tacked together like the sections of a prefabricated hen-house.

Professor Laski (1) uses five negatives in fifty-three words. One of these is superfluous, making nonsense of the whole passage, and in addition there is the slip *alien* for akin, making further nonsense, and several avoidable pieces of clumsiness which increase the general vagueness. Professor Hogben (2) plays ducks and drakes with a battery which is able to write prescriptions, and, while disapproving of the everyday phrase *put up with*, is unwilling to look *egregious* up in the dictionary and see what it means. (3), if one takes an uncharitable attitude towards it, is simply meaningless: probably one could work out its intended meaning by reading the whole of the article in which it occurs. In (4), the writer knows more or less what he wants to say, but an accumulation of stale phrases chokes him like tea leaves blocking a sink. In (5), words and meaning have almost parted company. People who write in this manner usually have a general emotional meaning—they dislike one thing and want to express solidarity with another—but they are not interested in the detail of what they are saying. A scrupulous writer, in every sentence that he writes, will ask himself at least four questions, thus: What am I trying to say? What words will express it? What image or idiom will make it clearer? Is this image fresh enough to have an effect? And he will probably ask himself

two more: Could I put it more shortly? Have I said anything that is avoidably ugly? But you are not obliged to go to all this trouble. You can shirk it by simply throwing your mind open and letting the ready-made phrases come crowding in. They will construct your sentences for you—even think your thoughts for you, to a certain extent—and at need they will perform the important service of partially concealing your meaning even from yourself. It is at this point that the special connexion between politics and the debasement of language becomes clear.

In our time it is broadly true that political writing is bad writing. Where it is not true, it will generally be found that the writer is some kind of rebel, expressing his private opinions and not a 'party line'. Orthodoxy, of whatever colour, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style. The political dialects to be found in pamphlets, leading articles, manifestos, White Papers and the speeches of under-secretaries do, of course, vary from party to party, but they are all alike in that one almost never finds in them a fresh, vivid, home-made turn of speech. When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases—*bestial atrocities, iron heel, blood-stained tyranny, free peoples of the world, stand shoulder to shoulder*—one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy: a feeling which suddenly becomes stronger at moments when the light catches the speaker's spectacles and turn them into blank discs which seem to have no eyes behind them. And this is not altogether fanciful. A speaker who uses that kind of phraseology has gone some distance towards turning himself into a machine. The appropriate noises are coming out of his larynx, but his brain is not involved as it would be if he were choosing his words for himself. If the speech he is making is one that he is accustomed to make over and over again, he may be almost unconscious of what he is saying,

as one is when one utters the responses in church. And this reduced state of consciousness, if not indispensable, is at any rate favourable to political conformity.

In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called *pacification*. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called *transfer of population* or *rectification of frontiers*. People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic lumber camps: this is called *elimination of unreliable elements*. Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them. Consider for instance some comfortable English professor defending Russian totalitarianism. He cannot say outright, 'I believe in killing off your opponents when you can get good results by doing so.' Probably, therefore, he will say something like this:

'While freely conceding that the Soviet regime exhibits certain features which the humanitarian may be inclined to deplore, we must, I think, agree that a certain curtailment of the right to political opposition is an unavoidable concomitant of transitional periods, and that the rigours which the Russian people have been called upon to undergo have been amply justified in the sphere of concrete achievement.'

The inflated style is itself a kind of euphemism. A mass of Latin words falls upon the facts like soft snow, blurring the outlines and covering up all the details. The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns as it were instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms, like a cuttlefish squirting out ink. In our age there is no such thing as 'keeping out of politics'. All issues are political issues, and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred and schizophrenia. When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer. I should expect to find—this is a guess which I have not sufficient knowledge to verify—that the German, Russian and Italian languages have all deteriorated in the last ten or fifteen years, as a result of dictatorship.

But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought. A bad usage can spread by tradition and imitation, even among people who should and do know better. The debased language that I have been discussing is in some ways very convenient. Phrases like, *a not unjustifiable assumption*, *leaves much to be desired*, *would serve no good purpose*, *a consideration which we should do well to bear in mind*, are a continuous temptation, a packet of aspirins always at one's elbow. Look back through this essay, and for certain you will find that I have again and again committed the very faults I am protesting against. By this morning's post I have received a pamphlet dealing with conditions in Germany. The author tells me that he 'felt impelled' to write it. I open it at random, and here is almost the first sentence that I see: '(The Allies) have an opportunity not only of achieving a radical transformation of Germany's social and political structure in such a way as to avoid a nationalistic reaction in Germany itself, but at the same time of laying the foundations of a co-operative and unified Europe.' You see, he 'feels impelled' to write—feels, presumably, that he has some-

thing new to say—and yet his words, like cavalry horses answering the bugle, group themselves automatically into the familiar dreary pattern. This invasion of one's mind by ready-made phrases (*lay the foundations*, *achieve a radical transformation*) can only be prevented if one is constantly on guard against them, and every such phrase anaesthetizes a portion of one's brain.

I said earlier that the decadence of our language is probably curable. Those who deny this would argue, if they produced an argument at all, that language merely reflects existing social conditions, and that we cannot influence its development by any direct tinkering with words and constructions. So far as the general tone or spirit of a language goes, this may be true, but it is not true in detail. Silly words and expressions have often disappeared, not through any evolutionary process but owing to the conscious action of a minority. Two recent examples were *explore every avenue* and *leave no stone unturned*, which were killed by the jeers of a few journalists. There is a long list of fly blown metaphors which could similarly be got rid of if enough people would interest themselves in the job; and it should also be possible to laugh the *not un*-formation out of existence,[1] to reduce the amount of Latin and Greek in the average sentence, to drive out foreign phrases and strayed scientific words, and, in general, to make, pretentiousness unfashionable. But all these are minor points. The defence of the English Language implies more than this, and perhaps it is best to start by saying what it does *not* imply.

To begin with it has nothing to do with archaism, with the salvaging of obsolete words and turns of speech, or with the setting up of a 'standard English' which must never be departed from. On the contrary, it is especially concerned with the

1. One can cure oneself of the *not un-* formation by memorizing this sentence: *A not unblack dog was chasing a not unsmall rabbit across a not ungreen field.*

scrapping of every word or idiom which has outworn its usefulness. It has nothing to do with correct grammar and syntax, which are of no importance so long as one makes one's meaning clear, or with the avoidance of Americanisms, or with having what is called a 'good prose style'. On the other hand it is not concerned with fake simplicity and the attempt to make written English colloquial. Nor does it even imply in every case preferring the Saxon word to the Latin one, though it does imply using the fewest and shortest words that will cover one's meaning. What is above all needed is to let the meaning choose the word, and not the other way about. In prose, the worst thing one can do with words is to surrender to them. When you think of a concrete object, you think wordlessly, and then, if you want to describe the thing you have been visualizing you probably hunt about till you find the exact words that seem to fit it. When you think of something abstract you are more inclined to use words from the start, and unless you make a conscious effort to prevent it, the existing dialect will come rushing in and do the job for you, at the expense of blurring or even changing your meaning. Probably it is better to put off using words as long as possible and get one's meaning as clear as one can through pictures or sensations. Afterwards one can choose—not simply *accept*—the phrases that will best cover the meaning, and then switch round and decide what impression one's words are likely to make on another person. This last effort of the mind cuts out all stale or mixed images, all prefabricated phrases, needless repetitions, and humbug and vagueness generally. But one can often be in doubt about the effect of a word or a phrase, and one needs rules that one can rely on when instinct fails. I think the following rules will cover most cases:

(*i*) Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech

which you are used to seeing in print.

(*ii*) Never use a long word where a short one will do.

(*iii*) If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.

(*iv*) Never use the passive where you can use the active.

(*v*) Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.

(*vi*) Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

These rules sound elementary, and so they are, but they demand a deep change of attitude in anyone who has grown used to writing in the style now fashionable. One could keep all of them and still write bad English, but one could not write the kind of stuff that I quoted in those five specimens at the beginning of this article.

I have not here been considering the literary use of language, but merely language as an instrument for expressing, and not for concealing or preventing thought. Stuart Chase and others have come near to claiming that all abstract words are meaningless, and have used this as a pretext for advocating a kind of political quietism. Since you don't know what Fascism is, how can you struggle against Fascism? One need not swallow such absurdities as this, but one ought to recognize that the present political chaos is connected with the decay of language, and that one can probably bring about some improvement by starting at the verbal end. If you simplify your English, you are freed from the worst follies of orthodoxy. You cannot speak any of the necessary dialects, and when you make a stupid remark its stupidity will be obvious, even to yourself. Political language—and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists—is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind. One cannot change this all in a

moment, but one can at least change one's own habits, and from time to time one can even, if one jeers loudly enough, send some worn-out and useless phrase—some *jackboot*, *Achilles' heel*, *hot-bed*, *melting pot*, *acid test*, *veritable inferno* or other lump of verbal refuse—into the dustbin where it belongs.

NOTES

[sic]: Latin for 'thus': used with brackets [*sic*] to show that a quoted passage, often containing some error, is precisely reproduced.

Jesuit: member of the Society of Jesus, a Roman Catholic religious order founded by Ignatius Loyola (1534).

Harold Laski: prominent Socialist writer who taught in the London School of Economics.

Play ducks and drakes: squander.

Egregious: remarkably bad.

Collocation: arrangement.

Vocable: word regarded as a unit of sound rather than as a unit of meaning.

Professor Lancelot Hogben: author of *Science for the Citizen* and *Mathematics for the Million.*

Fascist: one who believed in *Fascism*—the principles and organization of the patriotic and anti-communist movement in Italy started during World War 1, culminating in the dictatorship of Mussolini, and imitated by Fascist associations in other countries.

Socialism: theory of altering society by a more equal distribution of property.

Incendiarism: wilful destruction of property by fire.

Proletarian: working class, especially the industrial working class.

Petty-bourgeoisie: lower middle class.

Chauvanistic: militant, boastful, and unreasoning devotion to one's country, jingoism.

B.B.C.: British Broadcasting Corporation.

Galvanization: stimulation into life.

Canker: here, corrupting influence.

Atrophy: wasting away through imperfect nourishment.

Bottom: weaver (in Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) full of fantastic vanity, self-assurance and ignorance.

Traduce: misrepresent.

Effete: exhausted, worn, out, feeble.

Languorous: faint, soft.

Langham Place: in which the B.B.C. stands. The standard of speech is strict, southern English and high-class. Aitches are dropped by uneducated Londoners.

Brazen: shameless.

Masquerade: masked ball, false show, pretence.

Priggish: conceited.

Inhibited: inhibition is instinctive or habitual shrinking from some action as a thing forbidden.

Arch: main, chief, principal.

Bray: make a harsh, loud sound, as a donkey.

Inadvertently: unintentionally.

Hackneyed: stale, commonplace.

Prefabricated: made or built in standardized sections.

Solidarity: complete unity of purpose, interest and feeling.

Hack: common drudge, bad journalist who writes only to make money.

Responses in church: any part of the liturgy sung in answer to a priest.

Purge: clear or rid a nation or political party of persons held to be disloyal or undesirable.

Euphemism: substitution of a mild or vague expression for

a harsh or a blunt one.

Question begging: using an argument that assumes as proved the very thing one is trying to prove.

Pacification: establishment of secure peace in a nation.

Totalitarianism: government or state in which one political party or group maintains complete control and declares others illegal.

Regime: method of government.

Concomitant: accompanying or attendant condition.

Cuttlefish squiring out ink: mollusc ejecting black fluid when pursued.

Schizophrenia: mental disease.

Anaesthetize: render senseless.

Tinker: repair or patch roughly; work in an amateurish or clumsy way at a thing.

Pretentiousness: making claims to great merit or importance.

Salvage: save from wreck, fire, etc.

Americanism: word, phrase or idiom originating in or peculiar to American English.

Fake: false, sham, counterfeit.

Stuart Chase: American author of *The Tyranny of Words.*

Quietism: form of religious mysticism that involves complete extinction of the human will; drawing away from worldly things.

Jackboot: heavy boot that reaches above the knee.

Achilles' heel: weak or vulnerable point. In Homer's *Iliad,* Achilles, the Greek hero of the Trojan war was killed by an arrow that struck his only vulnerable point, his heel.

Hotbed: place favourable to the growth of vice.

Melting pot: crucible, container in which metals are melted.

Acid test: test in which acid is applied to test composition.

Veritable inferno: real hell.

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